

CHAPTER ONE

THE INVITATION

“Come and See”

As John the Baptist stood there with two of his disciples, Jesus passed and John stared hard at him and said: “Look, there is the Lamb of God.” Hearing this, the two disciples followed Jesus, and Jesus turned around, saw them following, and said, “What do you want?” “Rabbi [which means “teacher”], where do you live?” “Come and see,” he replied. So they went and saw where he lived and they stayed with him the rest of the day. It was about the tenth hour.

John 1:35–39

Imagine you are in this story for a moment. Imagine you are there with John the Baptist. He was a tough man. Picture him dressed in camel hair. He is separate from others. With a stern voice he says, “Repent! Repent! You are sinful people. Repent, repent, repent!”

People are there listening. Somehow they feel that there is something missing in their lives. Somehow they feel that they are busy with many things and exhausted or they are just sitting there and nothing is ever going to happen.

They go to this strange man—this wild man—and listen. John and Andrew, two of John’s disciples, are there with him. One day Jesus passes by. John looks hard at him and says, “That is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

John knew that his people were sinners and needed to repent, but he also knew that he could not take away the sins of those people; that taking away sins was not a human possibility. He said, “Repent, repent, repent!” But when Jesus passed by, John looked hard at him, and said to John and Andrew, “Look, that is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. That is the servant of God. He came to suffer. That is the One who has been sent to become the sacrifice, the Lamb of God, so that he can take away your sins.”

Just be there in this picture.

Just be there where John and Andrew are, eager to start a new life, with a new focus, a new beginning, a new heart, a new soul. Those two young men start following Jesus, and Jesus turns around and sees them following him and said, "What do you want?" And what do they say? Do they say, "Lord, we want to be your followers," "Lord, we want to do your will," "Lord, we want you to take our sins away"? They don't say any of that! Instead, they ask, "Where do you live?"

Somehow, right here in the beginning of the story we hear a very important question: Where do you live? What is your place? What is your way? How is it to be around you?

Jesus says, "Come and see."

He doesn't say, "Come into my world." He doesn't say, "Come, I will change you." He doesn't say, "Become my disciples," "Listen to me," "Do what I tell you," "Take up your cross." No. He says, "Come and see. Look around. Get to know me." That is the invitation.

They stayed with him. They went and saw where he lived and stayed with him the rest of the day. John says it was about the tenth hour, or four o'clock in the afternoon.

Jesus invited them and they came around him and they dwelled with him. They went willingly to his place. They saw a man very different from John the Baptist, who yelled, "Repent, repent, repent! The time has come." Instead, Jesus said, "Come see where I live."

They saw Jesus, the Lamb of God. The humble servant. Poor, gentle, warm, peacemaker, pure of heart. They saw him. Already then. They saw the Lamb of God.

There is a softness. There is a gentleness. There is a humility.

"Come and see."

"They stayed with him for the rest of the day."

Jesus invites them in to just look around.

Be there. Look with the eyes of the heart to the story you have heard.

We Are Invited

Jesus is offering an invitation to come into the House of God. It is an invitation to enter into God's dwelling place.

It is not an invitation with harsh demands. It is the story of the Lamb of God saying to us, "Come. Come to my home. Look around. Don't be afraid." Long before Jesus' radical call to leave everything behind, Jesus says, "Come, have a look where I am."

Jesus is a host who wants us around him. Jesus is the Good Shepherd of the Old Testament who invites his people to his table where the cup of life overflows.

This image of God inviting us to his home is used throughout scripture.

The Lord is my house. The Lord is my hiding place. The Lord is my awning.

The Lord is my refuge. The Lord is my tent. The Lord is my temple. The Lord is my dwelling place. The Lord is my home. The Lord is the place where I want to dwell all the days of my life.

God wants to be our room, our house. He wants to be anything that makes us feel at home. She is like a bird hugging us under her wings. She is like a woman holding us in her womb. She is Infinite Mother, Loving Host, Caring Father, the Good Provider who invites us to join Him.

There is a sense of being that is safe, that is good. In this dangerous world full of violence, chaos, and destruction, there is this place where we want to be. We want to be in the House of God—to feel safe, to be embraced, to be loved, to be cared for. With the psalmist we say, "Where else does my heart want to stay but in the House of the Lord?" (See Psalms 84 and 27.)

The word "home" continues to grow in significance. Jesus says, "I am going to the house of my Father to prepare a room for you because in the house of my Father there are many dwelling places" (John 14:2). Jesus tells us about that great home, that mansion, where we'll have a banquet and the cup is overflowing, where life will be one great celebration.

John's Gospel opens with an incredible vision of home. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and in the Word everything was created, and the Word became flesh and pitched its tent among us" (John 1:1–3, 14). Home is what the incarnation is all about. If you read the Gospel you hear how Jesus speaks: "I have made my home in you so you can make your home in me" (John 15:4–8). This vision of the House of God goes deeper and deeper. Suddenly, all these images merge and we realize that we are God's home and that we are invited to make our home where God has made God's home. We realize that right where we are, right here in this body, with this face, with these hands, with this heart, we are the place where God can dwell.

Listen carefully: Jesus wants you and me to become part of the intimate family of God. "Just as the Father loves me so I love you" (John 15:9). Jesus says, "You are no longer slaves, strangers and outsiders; no, you are friends because everything I have heard from my Father is yours, all the works I do you can do, and even greater ones. I am not the great person and you the little one—no, all that I can do, you can do too" (John 15:15–16).

The intimate relationship between the Father and the Son has a name. It is Spirit. Holy Spirit. "I want you to have my Spirit." "Spirit" means "breath." It comes from the ancient Greek word *pneuma*. "I want you to have my breathing. I want you to have that most intimate part of me so that the relationship that is between you and God is the same as between me and God, which is a divine relationship."

What you need to hear with your heart is that you are invited to dwell in the family of God. You are invited to be part of that intimate communion right now.

The spiritual life means you are part of the family of God.

When we say "I say this in the name of Jesus" or "I do this in the name of Jesus," we really mean "I do it from the place of God." A lot of people today think that if we do something in the name of Jesus it is because Jesus is not there so we do it as a representative of his. But that is not what it means. To speak in the name of Jesus, to dwell in the name of Jesus, to act in the name of Jesus, means that the name is where I am. Where are you? "I am alive in the name and that is where I dwell, that is where my home is." Once you are living there, you can go out into the world without ever leaving that place.

Outside of that place, outside of the heart of Jesus, all of our words and all of our thoughts add up to nothing. Whatever you do, never leave that place, because only in that place are you in God. Only from that place comes salvation, and salvation is what we have to bring forth into this world.

The invitation is "Come and see the place of God." In the beginning we think it is just his home, his physical place, but as the Gospel of John develops, John shows us that the place of God is the intimate life of God himself—the Father, Son, and Spirit who form a family of love into which we are invited. Following Jesus is the way to enter into that family of love.

We do not have to follow Jesus. First is the invitation. "Come, come. Come and see."