

“You Ain’t Seen Nothin’ Yet!”

John 1:35-51

*Jesus invites us to follow him,
bring some friends, and see it all!*

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Do you ever get the feeling that maybe you’ve missed out on something? Maybe something slipped by you, and you were not even aware? Maybe there is some factor for success in life, and you just don’t get it? I mean, other people seem to have everything—riches, fame, happy families, wonderful experiences—just look at their social media. It’s all perfect! We, on the other hand, seem to live in a state of perpetual longing. Maybe things aren’t bad, but they could be better. Maybe we are missing out.

There is even a social media hashtag (looks like a pound sign) for this feeling. It’s called FOMO; it stands for the Fear Of Missing Out. FOMO is the anxiety caused by wondering if you are missing something good that other people are experiencing—a concert, a restaurant, a movie, anything. FOMO has become a force in the social media world, because generally people only report the good things that happen to them. And here you are, stuck with all your troubles. You must be missing something, right?¹

The Irish rock band U2 had an award-winning hit song 30 years ago that expressed the frustration of unfulfilled desire. U2 professed to be Christians and often included spiritual themes in their songs. So it was with “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For,” part of which went like this: “I believe in the kingdom come/ Then all the colors will bleed into one/ Bleed into one/ But yes I’m still running/ You broke the bonds and you loosed the chains/ Carried the cross/ Of my shame/ Oh my shame/ You know I believe it/ But I still haven’t found what I’m looking for.”²

Sometimes we don’t even know what we need, but still we need it. When the Word became flesh and lived among us, the Jewish people were longing for a Messiah. Jesus appeared and met the need for a Savior. There was to be no more missing out.

In the Gospel of John, the day after the baptism of Jesus was busy. In the other Gospels, Jesus immediately went into the wilderness to pray and fast and be tempted by the Devil. But in John’s Gospel, Jesus was still hanging out with John by the Jordan River. John had accumulated some disciples, too, and when Jesus walked by, he told two of them, “There’s goes the Lamb of God!” The two disciples turned away from John and started to follow Jesus.

Jesus became aware of two men following him, and he turned around and asked, “What are you looking for?” It’s a real question. What were these two men looking for? A king,

a political revolutionary, a teacher of the Law, a spiritual master? There were many expectations of the Messiah. It's a question that applies to us as well. What are we looking for? Security, wealth, fame, power, happiness, spiritual peace, world peace, a moral example? What do we need from Jesus? Why do we follow him?

The answer of John's disciples was not an answer. They didn't know what they were looking for. They just wanted to come with Jesus. They were longing for a relationship that would mean something. They just wanted to be wherever Jesus was. So he invited them to "Come and see."

After a few hours with Jesus, Andrew, one of John's disciples, knew he had found what he was looking for. (Isn't it odd that the other disciple of John is never mentioned again or given a name. Maybe he wasn't impressed.) The first thing the next morning, Andrew went to find his brother Simon. Apparently, they both had taken a vacation from fishing the Sea of Galilee and were hanging out with John. Andrew announced he had found the Messiah and brought his brother to meet Jesus.

When Peter stood in front of Jesus, the translation we read said Jesus looked at him. But the Greek means that Jesus stared intently at Peter for a moment, then he said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas." Which is the Aramaic spelling of the Greek name Peter, both of which mean "Rock." Simon/Cephas/Peter will be the rock of the Christian movement after Jesus. Again, it is interesting that in the other Gospels, Peter doesn't get this nickname until he identifies Jesus as the Messiah near Caesarea Philippi. But here, when Jesus first meets Simon, he immediately perceives the potential and possibility of his life, and re-names him Peter.

Names are often changed in the Bible when there is a life-changing encounter with God. Abram became Abraham. Jacob became Israel. Saul became Paul. And Simon became Peter. Jesus could look into his eyes and see the dynamic evangelist and church father behind the clumsy, impetuous, faltering fisherman from Galilee.

There's a story told in several forms about Michelangelo, the great artist and sculptor. One day he was struggling to push a slab of marble up a small incline to his work area so he could begin to work on it. A neighbor watched Michelangelo for an hour struggle with the stone (apparently without offering to help), and finally he asked, "Michelangelo, why do you labor so hard over that ugly, heavy piece of rock?" Michelangelo replied, "Because there is an angel inside that wants to come out."³ That's what Jesus was doing with Peter—releasing his inner angel. And his investment paid off.

The next day, Jesus left the Jordan for Galilee. When he got to Galilee, he called Philip to follow him. Philip was from Bethsaida, a town right next to Jesus's adopted home of Capernaum, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Bethsaida was also the hometown of Andrew and Peter. Maybe they told Jesus to look Philip up. Almost immediately, Philip went to his friend Nathanael and told him he had found the Messiah. Nathanael said, "Yeah? Who?" Philip said, "Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said, "Really? Nazareth? Can anything good come from there?" Nazareth wasn't much, probably a few hundred people, up in the hills, not near the nice neighborhood of lakefront property, a dusty, dirty Podunk little town. Ironically, later we learn that Nathanael was from Cana, which was an equally dusty, dirty little village in the hills of Galilee next to Nazareth.

Nevertheless, Nathanael got to meet this Jesus from Nazareth of all places. When he walked up, Jesus recognized him as a man of integrity. Nathanael was skeptical and said,

“How do you know what kind of man I am?” Jesus said, “I saw you sitting under the fig tree before Philip told you about me.” And Nathanael made his confession of faith on the spot: “*Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!*”⁴ And Jesus said, “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet!” Well, sort of.

What have we learned so far? We have learned that the community of faith is built one invitation at a time. Jesus called his early disciples individually to follow him. Jesus invited Andrew to come and see what he was all about. Andrew brought Simon, who was forever changed. Jesus invited Philip to come along, and Philip brought Nathanael. Most people come into a faith community like a church because they were invited by a friend or family member. And most people who are not in a community of faith will respond if they are just invited.

The fastest-growing faith group in America today is the “nones,” not the Catholic sisters, but people who have no religious preference when asked. A small percentage of nones are atheists or agnostics, but most of them are people who just don’t have involvement in faith communities. They often identify themselves as “spiritual but not religious.” Sometimes it’s because they were not raised with religion, or maybe they had a bad experience in a church, or maybe they just don’t like the angry, judgmental, political places that many churches have become. But the interesting thing is, study after study shows that a large percentage of nones, maybe two-thirds, say that they would respond positively if someone invited them to church.⁵ It’s not that they’re hostile or even uninterested. They just haven’t been personally invited by someone they know and trust.

Have you invited a “none” to church lately? Have you invited anyone to “come and see” Jesus and experience the life he gives?

That’s the other thing we have learned today. Life-changing, transformational power comes through a personal relationship with Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth. Jesus didn’t just call his disciples one by one. He entered into a one-on-one relationship with them. Andrew knew it within hours. Peter got his name changed on the spot. Nathanael knew within moments that Jesus was awesome, and he confessed his faith in the One he had initially dismissed.

All it takes is a personal experience to see the truth. After Mother Teresa (a real nun) established the Missionaries of Charity, she received visitors from all over the world. One time a wealthy woman was visiting in Calcutta. She was so impressed, she pulled out her checkbook and asked, “How can I help you in your work?” Mother Teresa pushed the checkbook back into the woman’s purse, took her by the hand, and said “Come and see.” (Where have we heard that before?) Teresa led the woman into an impoverished street and found a hungry, frail child. “Care for her,” Mother Teresa said. The woman took the child in her lap, wiped her brow, and fed her. It was transformative. Mother Teresa was right when she said that when we care for a child, we are caring for Jesus. When we love the unloved, we are loving Jesus. And when we love and care for Jesus, we find life abundant and eternal.⁶

The strategy of individual invitation and the power of personal experience lead our lives to greater things. Nathanael was so impressed with the clairvoyance of Jesus, he confessed his faith on the spot: “*Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!*” Jesus had a curious response: “*Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.*”⁷ In other words, “You ain’t seen nothin’

yet.” Then he said to Nathanael, “*Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*”⁸ What?

Anybody Jewish in Jesus’ time (and maybe even some of you) would have immediately understood the reference of Jesus. Who saw the angels of God descending and ascending? And everybody said, “Jacob!” In the 28th chapter of Genesis, Jacob, the conniving, cheating twin brother of Esau, was on the run. Jacob had stolen Esau’s rightful blessing from their father Isaac, which was a big deal back then. Esau was just waiting for Isaac to die so he could kill Jacob. So Rebekah, Jacob’s mother, arranged for him to get out of town and go see her family a long way away. Jacob’s world had fallen apart. He was leaving home, and as conflicted as it was, he still felt anxious about his future. He was missing out by leaving home.

So Jacob put his head on a rock and lay down in the desert, and he had a dream. There was a stairway to heaven (not the Led Zeppelin kind), and the angels were ascending and descending on the stairway. At the top was the Lord, who said to Jacob, “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring, and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you ... I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”⁹ In other words, “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet!”

Jacob woke up from his dream and said, “*Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!*”¹⁰ Apparently he had decided to camp out in the Lord’s back yard. So he got up and marked the place with the stone he had used for a pillow, and he called it Bethel, which means “the house of God.”

If we have eyes to see, we are all camping in God’s back yard. The Lord is in this place, and we are standing in the house of God. People of God, people of faith, we ain’t seen nothin’ yet!

Maybe you are feeling a little FOMO today. Are you missing out, or afraid that you are? Are you longing for something that you’re not sure what it is? Does your spirit feel a little empty today?

Let me suggest a new acronym for you. Instead of FOMO, try NEMO. It stands for Not Ever Missing Out. In Jesus, you will never miss out on anything important ever. Jesus satisfies our deep, heartfelt longing for a Savior. He invites us to come and see the life he wants for us. In turn, we invite others to come and see Jesus, and we build up our community of faith. We are the hands and the feet and the mouth of Jesus in the world, and we need to touch and walk and speak his word.

Respond to this invitation of Jesus, and you will see greater things for your life and for the church. Isn’t that what you’re looking for?

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fear_of_missing_out.

² Paul David Hewson / Adam Clayton / Larry Mullen / Dave Evans, "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For," © Polygram Int. Music Publishing B.v., 1987.

³ Dave Stone, "Keep the Dust Off the Highchair," *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 143.

⁴ John 1:49.

⁵ Bradley Wright, "Is American Christianity on Its Last Legs? The Data Say Otherwise." *Christianity Today* online, September 12, 2019.

⁶ James Howell, "Weekly Preaching Notions," January 1, 2024.

<https://jameshowellsweeklypreachingnotions.blogspot.com/>.

⁷ John 1:50.

⁸ John 1:51.

⁹ Genesis 28:13-15.

¹⁰ Genesis 28:16.