17th Sunday After Trinity
SERMON ON EVANGELISM
West Henrietta - 1961

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

St. John 1: 45,46 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see!

COME AND SEE

In three weeks, during our Lutheran Open House Week, many of you will be called upon to visit the unchurched people of our community to confront them with Christ. I can well imagine that already some of you have a squeamish feeling in the pit of your stomach, wishing that there were some easy way for you to get out of it. You are hesitant, because you are afraid you will be a bother to these people. You do not want to force your faith on anyone. Christians have always been hesitant about giving the impression that they are forcing their faith on someone else. They realize that their own vibrant faith in Christ was not forced upon them, and they do not want to force their faith on anyone else. You cannot force Christianity upon people, but you can urge them to consider its claims. Wit all the vigor at your command, you can invite them to COME AND SEE the wonderful Savior who has meant so much to you in your life.

We live in a world which does not hesitate to advertise its products to the point where both advertising and products are hanging out of our ears. The same world thinks of religion as a private matter which need not and should not be advertised. I must agree that religion should not be advertised with the same huckster methods employed for many products on the market today. Nevertheless, we do not look upon the Christian faith as something to keep to ourselves. We have some important and vital information to share with people in this tense and troubled world. We do not force it upon them, but invite them to listen, to receive, and to have, in the same way that we, by the power of God's Holy Spirit, have listened, have received, and now have. We do not hesitate to say that we have discovered the mercy of God in Jesus Christ; like the apostles, we cannot but tell of the things we have seen and heard.

This is the way Christian people have always reacted to the discovery of Christ. When Philip found Jesus, he rushed up to his best friend, Nathanael,

bursting with the good news: We have found Him of Whom Moses in the law and also the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Nathanael responde with little enthusiasm: Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? He saw no reaso for becoming excited. Philip expected his friend to welcome the good news. The good news was apparently too good to be true. Philip's answer is the one Christi have always given to skepticism down through the ages: Come and see! Nathanael's question might have had the effect of a bucketful of ice water on most people, bu not on Philip. He had something on his heart and had to come out with it: We have found Him of Whom Moses in the law and also the prophets did write. What did he mean? Nathanael knew exactly what he meant. For 2000 years, ever since the time of Abraham, God had promised that one day His love would send a Redeemer who woul save His people from their sins. Philip said: We have found Him.

When I was a boy and we found something in the street or on the sidewalk the first one to reach it would pick it up and say, Finders,keepers; losers, weepers! We meant that because we had found it, we were entitled to keep it. Possess ion is nine points of the law. This principle may operate in every other area of life, but it does not apply to the greatest discovery of all. Those who have really found Jesus Christ have never been able to keep that story to themselves. This may sound like a hard ~~truth~~ saying, but it is eternally true: You cannot have Christ for yourself until you give Him away. His words are unmistakably clear: Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it. You cannot pass the buck and say that you are too old - let the ~~older~~ younger ones do it; or that you are too young - let the older ones do it. From the first moment you were able to say, Jesus, until your dying breath - your duty ~~has been~~ is to point the way to the Cross with the appealing declaration: Come and see! As long as God gives you life, the words of Jesus hold true: You shall be witnesses unto Me!

Once you have really found Christ you will kneel down at Calvary and say to yourself: I have found that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of my deepest needs. Whenever I commit a wrong, I can confess my sin to God. I know that, for the sake

of Jesus, God forgives me. Living in this faith, I have a clear conscience. When I am troubled, I am comforted by Christ. When other people are troubled, I can bring them comfort in Christ. When I need direction, Christ leads me. When other people need direction, I can point them to Christ. When I am tempted or in doubt, I turn to Christ. Through Christ I have the absolute assurance that God loves me, and is even now giving me eternal life. If I had to make the choice between Christ and anything or anyone else, I would choose Christ. Christ has given purpose and meaning to my life now and forever!

Having learned to know Christ in this way, you can't help sharing the experience. If you have enjoyed a certain food or discovered a good recipe, you want to tell others about it. If you have read a stirring book, you share your enthusiasm with others, telling them, You ought to read it yourself. If you have found a doctor whose knowledge and experience has helped you, you recommend him to others. If we are ready to recommend a physician for the care of the body, is there any reason under the sun why we should not show the same enthusiasm for the Great Physician, Who is able to cure the ills of both body and soul? We are willing to share all kinds of news, both good and bad. Is there any reason why we should not share the best news of all? If we are real finders of Jesus Christ, how can we be keepers of the discovery that has made all the difference in the world to our lives -- the difference between eternal life and eternal separation from our God?

Philip said to his doubting friend, Come and see! Philip was a born advertiser. He told his friend the whole story. He did not leave Nathanael standing there, hesitating about what to do. He put a hook into his advertisement, calling for action, immediate action, Come! See! We too invite people to come and see, without a single misgiving about the quality of what we are inviting them to come and see. We invite them to come and see Christ; that is enough!

This is not the nonchalant invitation some Christians imagine it to be. Someone has said, A local congregation is always in danger of becoming a chubby, clubby, complacent collection of nice folks - a sort of closed shop for the

edification of the saints. Our Lord said of Himself, The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. He never allowed Himself to forget why He came - to seek and save the lost. Those who would be His disciples must share Hi concern and passion for the lost. A pastor once asked his Bible class: Will you witness to at least one person during the week? They promised to do so, and reported the next week the results of their witnessing. Most of the people had sai We have a beautiful church at the corner of 12th and Henry. Air-conditioned too! Our pastor preaches very interesting sermons. The people are friendly and you wi enjoy the social programs of our organizations. Why don't you visit us sometime? They had missed the main point. Jesus never said: You shall witness to the fact that you have a fine congregation with a full program of activities. He said: You shall be witnesses unto Me!

The people to whom we witness, like Nathanael, may not be interested in Christ. We may be inclined to think to ourselves, What's the use? Why bother? These people are not interested. They may not be interested, but Christ is interested in them, just as much as He is interested in us. If this is true, who is going to tell them about Christ - unless we do? If a man is drowning and I have a life preserver in my hands, it is my duty to throw it to him. The drowning man ma not take the life preserver, but my duty is plain. If I see a man who would be lost forever without Christ, and I have the opportunity to tell him how he can be saved, I have the duty to speak without fear and without apology. He may not be interested, he may ignore what I say, but my duty is plain. Jesus said, You shall be witnesses unto Me. Whosoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in heaven.

Having found Christ, you cannot keep Him to yourself. Like Philip, you must bring others to Him. There is no other alternative. Come and See!

Amen.