

**Jon Hauerwas - October 13, 2019 - Come and See  
Psalm 66:1-4 and Psalm 66:5-12**

Friends, why are we here? I don't just mean here, together, in worship today. I'm going further than that and asking a question about the nature of our existence – about the meaning of life itself. Why, I wonder, did God choose to fill the earth with plants, and animals, and people, each of which would share the natural world with the one who brought all things into being? Why, do you suppose, are we here?

At the beginning of our Bibles, Genesis leads us through the story of creation. There, we learn that on each of six days, God brings something new into being. And then, when each day's work has finished, God pauses - very purposefully, God pauses - in order to evaluate the progress. God's senses immediately take over surveying all that has been accomplished. And then, upon seeing that it is good, God affirms this new creation.

Recently, I spent some time reflecting upon God's pattern of creating and pausing, looking and evaluating, and, finally, affirming. In doing so, I realized that we often follow a similar template in our own lives. Just imagine, for example, that we've just finished mulching the garden, or painting the bathroom, or displaying the fall decorations. At the end of the day, we pause. With our senses, we survey the

work of our hands. We evaluate the progress. And when we're finally satisfied with the result, we say to ourselves, "I like this. This is good."

Yet, none of us works so diligently or strives so persistently to make things pleasing in order that we might enjoy them in isolation. No. When everything is ready, when everything is in place, when everything is to our liking, we call out to our family and our friends to "come and see," inviting them into our lives. And we do this with the intention of sharing our good gifts with them.

When our guests arrive, we provide them with our best. We prepare one of our favorite meals. We delight in their company. We are attentive to the conversation. We share authentic community and we say to ourselves, "this is very good."

Both of our scriptures this morning come to us from Psalm 66. Here, we receive the invitation to "come and see what God has done." In rich tones, the psalmist goes on to describe God's faithfulness throughout history. Here, we find commentary on the gift of the Exodus, and words of thanksgiving for the preservation of life itself.

The author of these passages is a fellow believer who beckons us to dwell for a moment in the past. It's as if we're standing in an athletic stadium on the first day of a new season. A spotlight dances across the jerseys of retired Hall of Famers and illumines the banners of championship memories not to be forgotten. The sound system swells as the hype man introduces the new season's chosen squad.

The message here is lost on no one. The past was glorious. The future is filled with hope. Let us come and see what new thing is happening. The fans are called to rise to their feet, to make some noise, and to be a part of this moment. And then, at the end of the day, when the contest has finished, everyone pauses, and reflects, and affirms what is good before resting and preparing to continue the work once again.

As you know, God's work within us did not end with creation, or the Exodus, or when Psalm 66 was written. No. Our ancient story carried on through the mouths of prophets and the ministry of Jesus Christ. We learn, for example, in John's gospel that "Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus the son of Joseph from Nazareth. Nathanael said to him, Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'"

We know that even in the presence of Jesus, some were skeptical. But even his skeptics recognized something extraordinary about him. Therefore, they invited others to come and see. Later in John's gospel, Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well and tells her about living water. Then, following that encounter, the woman returns to her own people and says, "come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"

It's the same question that was asked at the resurrection. At the end of Matthew's gospel, we find these words, "after the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. The angel's appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.'"

In every generation, the faith is transmitted by people like you and I who turn to our neighbors and say, "come and see what new thing God is doing among us."

Come and see why divisiveness is a poison that seeks to stunt our growth. Come and see what justice looks like, what mercy feels like, and what it means to walk in the ways of compassion.

Come and see how wealth can become a tool rather than a master. Come and see how we are freed from the illusion of our own perfection and from the burdens that threaten to overwhelm us. Come and see how God unshackles us from an insistence upon our own way and calls us into relationships of mutuality and trust.

Come and see what it means when we say that grace abounds and that we are reconciled to God through Christ. Come and see how prayer is more effective than retribution, and how people who are so different from one another are still invited to the same table and called brothers and sisters in faith. Come and enjoy all that God has created. Come. Let us affirm it with the work of our lives and offerings of our hands. May it be so and all thanks be to God. Amen.