

**Sermon: Seeing with spiritual eyes**  
**John 1:29-42**  
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Two people can see the same event and draw very different conclusions. People can look at the situation in Egypt, and interpret the events of the past year in totally opposite manners. The present leaders of this country, for some like saviours, for others they are the incarnation of the devil.

For some, when they look at Jesus, He is God himself. Others see Him and shrug their shoulders and move on, not interested in serving and worshipping our Lord. They do not believe in Him.

How can we know Jesus Christ as He really is? Is it possible to say, I know Him? The Russian writer Leo Tolstoy wrote somewhere, to know Christ is to live. This is of course what the church has always taught - based on the Holy Scriptures.

The events around the Baptism of Jesus may help us to see what we must do if we want to truly know Him.

**1 Who is Jesus? John looked, saw and understood**

When Jesus came to be baptised, John the Baptist saw Jesus come, and he told the people around him, "Look at him! Look at Jesus." The whole passage that we read is actually full of seeing and looking. In the short passage I counted words like 'seeing' and 'looking' 12 times.

When John looked at Jesus, what did he see?

'He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'

'He was before me'

'He baptises with the Holy Spirit'

'He is the Son of God'

These are all statements loaded with meaning:

He is the Lamb of God; this speaks of Jesus being God's answer to our problems of sin. He is the Lamb - comparable to how in the Jewish worship services lambs were used for bloody sacrifices to do away with the sins of the people. Jesus was the perfect Lamb whose sacrifice would be absolutely enough once and for all. And God himself gave this Lamb to us; that is why He is called the *Lamb of God*.

And Jesus baptises with the Holy Spirit; Imagine, the Spirit of God, his eternal Spirit, could be directed by Jesus. This was awe-inspiring for John. "My cousin, He can tell the

Spirit of God, God himself, what to do!" So John understood, "He is the eternal Son of God".

Eternal, yes. John the Baptist says that Jesus existed before him. Strange. John was actually a few months older than his cousin Jesus, so he could not simply mean that Jesus was older. He means: the Son of God existed even before I existed, namely, eternally.

John the Baptist told his audience that at first he did not know Jesus; strange, of course he knew Jesus. They were of the same age and I am sure they grew up together, they met each other at family parties, played together. So what does he mean when he says he did not know him?

He meant of course, he did not know Jesus as he truly was - the divine Lamb, the Son of God, the one who baptises with the Spirit. God from God, light from light.

How did John find out about all this? How did he truly get to know Jesus Christ? John answers that he found out because God had revealed this to him. God had spoken directly to Him and declared to John, we do not know how, that if he would see the Spirit in the form of a dove descend on someone, He would be the one who would baptise with the Spirit.

When John saw the Spirit descend on Jesus, he knew: this is the one! Did all people who looked at that event see the Spirit descend on Jesus? I do not think so. Maybe they saw a dove; but it was John who truly saw. His eyes were opened. God had spoken, God revealed, God showed. If God does not show, we see nothing at all.

God opened his spiritual eyes, so John could say, "I have seen that the Spirit descended on Jesus, and I witness that He is the Son of God."

## **2 We need to see afresh - by looking with new eyes.**

The seeing of John went beyond the eye. It became a seeing with the heart. He became a witness to the fact that Jesus was the Son of God. So he tells all people around him, 'Look at him!'

It really makes all the difference how we look. To read the bible and to know your theology is really not enough. It is not enough to repeat the statements of John the Baptist, and then say: 'We know who Jesus Christ is.'

Holy Scriptures and the Church point us to look for Jesus and they set the framework for what we believe of Him and how to relate to Him. And this is absolutely crucial. But the Bible and the Church are not a substitute for real faith and for us to search for Jesus himself.

From the pages of the Word of God we are told by John the Baptist to look at the actual Jesus Christ.

Sure, the Bible testifies to us about the truth and the Church teaches us what to believe. But neither the Bible nor the Church, but only God can open our spiritual eyes, so that we truly see God and Jesus Christ himself with the eyes of our heart. He needs to work in our hearts. Only then do we know Jesus as He is.

In this we cannot be passive. It is hard work. How? God uses normal means; he uses his Word, he uses Church, He uses our searching and our efforts of looking at Him, our contemplation, he uses all this to make us see.

So we must do all this, and look intently. Read, go to Church, study. Prayerfully contemplate. Make it our goal to look and understand what we see of Him. This is hard labour not just for the eye, but for the mind and for the soul.

This looking at Jesus is a duty and a joy that lasts a lifetime. We are never finished.

John had looked at Jesus, at his cousin, so often. He just saw his cousin. But look more, look deeper, search, until you truly see; and we will increasingly see Jesus as He is - God himself, the one who forgave our sins in his sacrificial love.

This was the desire of the two disciples of John the Baptist, who became disciples of Jesus. One of them was Andrew. The other one not mentioned by name was probably John the Evangelist himself - the one who wrote the story we have read.

Maybe this is why he tells us that it was the 10th hour of the day when they met with Jesus - to give a hint to the readers that he knew the details of what happened. He was an eyewitness to all this.

The two disciples followed Jesus because John the Baptist had told them, "See, the Lamb of God." Did these disciples know what those words meant? I doubt it. But they were interested enough to follow Jesus because they trusted John. They trusted the Word of God spoken to them, to begin the process of personally seeing Jesus.

### **3 We really get to know him and ourselves, when he looks as us.**

Or was it actually Jesus who first saw *them*? They followed Jesus, and then Jesus turned around and he saw them following him. This 'seeing' by Jesus was not just a quick glance. He took careful notice of Andrew and John.

He asked: 'What are you seeking?' Is Jesus testing their motives?

They could have answered:

'We are here because we need your blessing'

'We need to be sure of our eternal fate'.

'We need stability'

'give us security'

'We need to be better people.'

'We like some good liturgy'

'We need some time out, at least one hour a week, for the spiritual things of life'

'We need to find ourselves'

'We need to be in touch with our inner person'

Have a look on the internet for the things people care for most. A spouse, money, happiness, health, some seek god or gods, being famous, and more.

What is our life's goal? It is not bad at all to ask ourselves this question every now and then. When Jesus looks at you and asks you, "What do you want?", what do you answer?

What were Andrew and John looking for?

They simply answer, 'My teacher, where are you staying?' They want to be with him, because they want to learn from him personally. They want to have a long, uninterrupted time with Jesus himself, to learn from Jesus who He is. They want to be with him personally and that is how they want to learn.

That is how we get to know Jesus. By being with him in quiet contemplation of his life and words, and in prayer. By reading the meetings of others with Jesus as recorded in the Bible.

"Come and see!" is what Jesus tells them. The Jewish Rabbis had a way of using this phrase in their teaching. They would say: "Do you want to know the answer to your question? Do you want to know the solution to your problem? Come and see, and we will think about it together."

Christian faith is not a matter of knowing all the answers to your questions; it is about a direct and personal relationship with Jesus Christ himself. With God himself. Sure, this gives us a few answers to our many questions but much more important, we thereby know Christ, we know God, and that is life.

The hours Andrew and John spent with our Lord were life-changing. Andrew was so moved that he went and found his brother, Simon. "We have found the Messiah", Andrew told his brother.

We have found? Surely. They followed, they saw, they became close with our Lord. But was it not rather Jesus who found them? Their knowledge of Jesus really began with Jesus who looked at them. That is how we get to know Him. With the eyes of Jesus looking into our life. When he looks at us and asks us what we want.

Look what happens when Jesus meets with Simon. Again we read, Jesus looked at him. Jesus, by looking at Simon, entered into his heart. This is the consequence of being with Jesus with an open eye, an open mind, an open heart.

Jesus knew Simon, and as he looked at him, he said: "I know you, you are Simon, the son of Jona. But your name will be changed, it shall be Cephas, Peter, rock."

Jesus looked upon Simon, looked him over, and He showed Simon that He already knew who he was, and what he was to become.

## **Conclusion**

In meeting with our Lord Jesus, we get to know Him, but we even learn about ourselves. The best way to know who we are and to understand ourselves, is to see ourselves through the eyes of our Lord. He made us; He cares for us; He carries us to our destination.

Who does not want to know this Lord better? For this we need to be intentional. We need to look, see, search, in the context of Holy Scriptures and the teaching of the Church that point us to Him. We need to spend time and energy in being with Him, thinking about Him, talking to Him, listening to Him, to grow in our perception of who He is.

This is hard work, it needs patience and stamina. But the result is meeting with the Son of God himself, the one who knows you inside out and who desires to be known by you. This perception, this knowledge, means true life.

## **Amen**