Sermon – John 1:29-42
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Grace Lutheran Church
2 Epiphany – Year A
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"Come and See"

Sisters and brothers in Christ, grace be unto you and peace in the name God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. Did you see that? With three kids and only two of us, Erika and I are often not in the same place, and we are often missing out on what one or another of the kids is up to. While it is not quite the same as being there, we find ourselves resorting to the next best thing, zipping photos and videos of this hockey game or that band concert to one another. Did you see that? Just yesterday, I found myself suit shopping with Anders, who is somehow almost done with middle school at Grace and is therefore in need of a new suit for eighth grade pictures and graduation. While I do trust my impeccable sartorial instincts, I nevertheless texted his mother a photo before buying. Just to make sure. Of course, there was a time before cell phones. Remember that? On McArthur St., where I grew in Appleton, WI, there were lots of kids around my age, and we were all obsessed with sports. We'd be watching this or that game in our own homes, but when something remarkable happened – Kirk Gibson's walk-off homer, Doug Flutie's Hail Mary, George Brett's pine tar histrionics, some team from Chicago winning the Super Bowl – we'd run outside simultaneously, asking each other a question to which we already knew the answer: Did you see that? You bet we did. And not only did we see it, we had a deep-seated need to share the moment with one another. Seeing isn't enough. It's seeing and sharing that marks and makes the moment.

2. It is this sort of invitation, this epiphanic sharing, that ripples out today after Jesus leaves the waters of the Jordan and returns to dry land. First, twice, we hear the Baptist's cry: Look, here is the Lamb of God! Then, as Andrew and another disciple leave John to follow Jesus, they discover another truth: Jesus is the Messiah, God's Anointed, the One who will restore God's reign in and over this world. These early professions of faith – Lamb of God, Messiah – point with incredible clarity to Jesus' purpose and identity, evocative as they are of the history, hopes, and expectations of their people. But one wonders if John, Andrew, and those to whom they spoke, including Simon Peter, truly grasped the meaning of the words coming out of their mouths. Whatever their understanding, their confession of faith, even at this early stage, is remarkable. They are pointing away from themselves to Jesus. He alone is the Lamb of God. They are pointing away from all others who might pretend to such a position. Jesus alone is Messiah. And they are pointing away from all that would seek to hurt and harm them – from their own sin to the oppressive empire – and professing the hope that God is doing a new thing. Are you looking for hope, something that will help you finally lift your eyes up from drudgery, despair, desolation? Looking for something – *someone* – who will meet your gaze in return? Come and see.

3. Our eyes, however, are haunted by visions unwanted. The same technology that helps Erika and I share images of our children enables us to see anywhere in the world. And while I am by no means suggesting that we shouldn't be watching, these images sometimes threaten to overwhelm us. From the scenes on the streets of Minneapolis to those on the streets of Tehran, we are reminded that there is so much that is so wrong in this world. Such scenes emerge for different reasons, of course, and are vastly different, but we are reminded of worldly truths. That power is rarely benevolent. That sin is rampant and life valued too little Do we dare look up? Do we dare to hope? Do we, as one of you asked this morning, even have the strength to get out of bed in the morning?

4. We do, if our gaze rests upon Jesus. Tomorrow, our nation will pause to honor the memory of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King reminds us to point away from ourselves. He was more than an activist. He was a proclaimer of the truth, a pointer toward hope, a signal showing forth the hope of this world. In a sermon more memorable than this one, "The Drum Major Instinct," Dr King preaches: "Nineteen centuries have come and gone and today [Jesus] stands as the most influential figure that ever entered human history. All of the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned put together have not affected [life] on earth as much as that one solitary one" in whom "we can make of this old world a new world." Dr. King reminds us, calls us, in the midst of all that would seek to beat us down or steal our hope, to look to Jesus. We look to Jesus and we see God come to earth. This God, Dr. King proclaims, "is not a weak God, He is not an incompetent God and consequently He is able to beat back gigantic mountains of opposition and to bring low prodigious hill tops of evil. The ringing cry of the Christian faith is that our God is able."

5. How? Come and see. Jesus defeats sin and death itself by first climbing the lonely hilltop Calvary's evil. Behold the Lamb of God! Faced with death on Moriah, God gave a ram in Isaac's place. Heavy laden with sin, God provided a scapegoat each Day of Atonement, that the people would find another year of forgiveness. From the lamb of Nathan's parable for David to the Servant Song's lamb that goes silent to the slaughter, John's profession of faith evokes a rich tapestry of images, of the many and various ways God stands in the gap for us. But none is more powerful than the communal meal eaten by a fearful people in haste on their last night in Egypt. Taking a young, unblemished lamb, the people found nourishment for their flight to freedom and hope for the future. Marked by the blood, their homes became gateways to freedom. And so, as he goes willingly to the cross, Jesus – unblemished, legs unbroken

– gives his own blood and becomes the lifeblood of this world. In this feast, we are reminded once more of the lengths to which our God would go to save us. Our Good Shepherd is the Lamb of God, who lays down his life for the sheep. Come and see this Messiah who makes a way to life and freedom, who frees us to work for life for all in this world, trusting that our life in the world to come is held irrevocably in God's hands. Our lives and been caught up in the ripples from the Jordon, baptized into his death and resurrection, into the great Passover from death to life.

6. Of course, in our reading today it's still early in the story. Can this all be true? Has Jesus really come for this? With Andrew and the other disciple, we ask, "Where are you staying, Jesus?" It turns out, he's staying with us. Or as he'll say later, he abides. Jesus has come to make God's home with us. The sin of the world is real, but it is also already defeated. Hang in there, for Christ is with you. As the psalmist sings, God will lift you up from the pit again. Keep working, for you are already forgiven and free. What might God Jesus do through you? Drawn together in Christ, come and see. Amen.

And now may that peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, this day and forever. Amen.