

Title: "Introducing Jesus"

Text: John 1:35-51

My friends, I want to re-introduce you to Jesus this year!

And I chose this passage from John's Gospel to begin,  
-simply because it is amazing how many people get  
introduced to Jesus in the span of these 17 verses from  
John 1:35-51.

We have John the Baptist who introduces Andrew and another  
young man to Jesus.

-And then after those two go and spend a day with Jesus,  
-Andrew can't wait to find his brother Simon Peter and  
introduce him to Jesus.

-And then one of their friends, Philip, meets Jesus,  
-and he immediately goes and gets another one of their  
friends named Nathaniel, and says,  
"Come on, you've got to come and meet this guy, Jesus."

-And so Nathaniel gets introduced to Jesus.

It's just one person after another, and pretty soon all these  
different people are gathered around Jesus and don't want  
to leave.

Later Jesus will come across a guy named Matthew, who is a  
tax collector.

-And after Matthew meets Jesus, he decides he wants that  
all his other tax collector co-workers ought to all meet  
him to.

-So he has a dinner party at his house to introduce them all  
to Jesus.

It happens again and again in the Gospels.

-And that tells us something about this Jesus, doesn't it?

-He was the kind of person that people were drawn to.

-He wasn't off-putting. He wasn't holier-than-thou.

-He wasn't a party-pooper.

People liked him. People liked hanging around him. People  
couldn't wait to introduce their friends to him.

-They wanted other people to come to know him.

In fact, if you think about it, the entire New Testament was written to introduce people to Jesus.

It was written by people who had been introduced to Jesus,  
-and had come to know Jesus  
-and who wanted more than anything to introduce others to Jesus.

Have you ever had a friend like that?

-Someone you liked so much, and liked being around so much that you weren't at all embarrassed to introduce her to your friends or family or coworkers?  
-In fact, you wanted to introduce her to your friends and family and co-workers.

I remember the first time my older brother Jon brought a young woman home to meet the family.

-She's now his wife, and we knew she would be the minute her brought her home.  
-He had dated a variety of women, but had never brought any of them home to meet the family.  
-So when he showed up with Susan at a family party we were having with all kinds of family friends there,  
-everyone thought, "Woe, she must be the one!"

And he thought so! That's why he brought her home!

-He had found someone he was delighted to be with, and he thought she was so wonderful he wanted the rest of us to meet her, too.

That's how so many people felt about Jesus.

-Once they had met him, they thought he was so wonderful they wanted others to meet him, too.

And my question for us is: Is that how we feel about Jesus?

Has our experience of Jesus been:

-that we have discovered in Jesus this amazing person  
-and we have become so "taken" with him, that we want to introduce him to all our friends and family?

If not, then I want to re-introduce us to Jesus this year.  
-Because that really is the affect that Jesus had on people then,  
-and I do believe it is the affect that meeting and coming to know Jesus is supposed to have on us now.

So maybe we need to be re-introduced to Jesus?  
-And maybe the whole culture and community around us needs to be re-introduced to Jesus.

Perhaps if we came to know Jesus in the way the New Testament writers had come to know Jesus,  
-we might want to make Jesus known to the people around us, too.  
-Maybe like John the Baptist, and Andrew, and Peter, and Philip and Nathaniel, and Matthew  
-we might grab our friends and family and co-workers and say,  
“Come on, you’ve got to come and meet this guy! He’s amazing.”

So this is what we are going to be about this coming year.  
-We are going to invite the writers of the New Testament to “re-introduce us” to Jesus.

On Sunday mornings I will be preaching from various Gospels and New Testament letters,  
-as we seek to be re-introduced to Jesus through the eyes of Peter, Paul, Matthew, Mark, Luke, James,  
-Mary, Jesus’ mother, Mary Magdalene, and some of the other women who came to love and follow Jesus.

And in the high school and adult Bible study classes we have each Sunday between the services,  
-we will be inviting this Gospel writer John, to introduce us to Jesus.

John was known later as the beloved disciple, and he was probably the “other disciple” mentioned here in this passage who went with Andrew that day to meet Jesus and spend the day with him.

John would tell us that Jesus was the best and most beloved friend he ever had.

-And he would be so delighted to introduce us to Jesus so that we might know him, too.

So come at 9:45am each Sunday morning if you'd like to be introduced to Jesus by John,  
-who may have known him better than anyone else.

And then the Wednesday Bible study will also tie into this overall theme,  
-as will some small groups that will be beginning in October, and the Women's and Men's breakfasts in various ways.

But for today, let's begin the introduction to Jesus with the first person in the New Testament who knew who Jesus was,  
-and began introducing others to him: John the Baptist.

Now John the Baptist is not John the Gospel writer.

-They are two different men named John.

-John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin.

-He was the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

-And Elizabeth was Mary's cousin, the one Mary went to after the angel came to her and announced that she was going to have a baby, conceived by the Holy Spirit.

-Elizabeth was the one who was also miraculously expecting a baby at the time,

-and whose baby in her womb leapt when Mary first arrived at Elizabeth's home.

-That baby in the womb was John, who would later grow up to be a prophet,

-who would call the nation of Israel to repentance and faith in preparation for the coming of the Messiah.

-And as a sign of people's repentance and faith, John called people to be baptized in the Jordan River.

That's why he became known as the "baptizer" or "John the Baptist."

-And at the time, John baptizing people in the Jordan River was the biggest event to happen in Israel for 100s of years.

-He was the first real prophet that had spoken God's word to God's people in 8-10 generations.

So "John the Baptizer" was a name known all over Israel,  
-from King Herod's household in Jerusalem all the way to the backwoods of Galilee.  
-People came from everywhere to hear him speak, and to be baptized by him in the river.

And Jesus went, too.

-All the way from the little village of Nazareth in Galilee.  
-And when John saw his cousin coming to him for baptism,  
-he said, "Jesus, I shouldn't be baptizing you. You should be baptizing me."

But Jesus said, "No cousin, you are God's prophet,  
-and to fulfill all righteousness by being obedient to the word of God you have spoken,  
-I, too, submit to baptism as one of God's people."

And so John baptized Jesus, and all four gospels tell us that as Jesus came up out of the water,  
-the heavens parted, and the Spirit of God came down on him in the form of a dove,  
-and the voice of God spoke saying, "This is my Son, whom I love, and with whom I am well pleased."

And that was the beginning of Jesus introduction to the world.  
-The Father spoke from heaven, "This is my Son."  
-And the Spirit descended from heaven anointing Jesus for ministry.  
-And John the Baptist began to point people away from himself, and from his words, and his baptism,  
-and he began pointing people to Jesus.

"There," he said, "is the Lamb of God. He is the one who will take away your sins. My baptism in water is symbolic of cleansing.  
-He is the one who will truly cleanse you of your sins and anoint you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

My friends, that is the first introduction of Jesus I'd like us to

hear for ourselves.

The Father Himself in heaven, and his chosen prophet John the Baptist on earth,  
-want to introduce you and me to Jesus today just as they introduced Jesus to the people of Israel 2000 years ago.

The Father wants you and me to meet His Son.  
-He wants more than anything that we would come to know and love the Son whom He knows and loves.  
-The Father wants you and me to be just as well pleased with Jesus as He was that day, and is now on this day, and always will be.

The Father wants you and me to hear his voice today, saying,  
“Meet Jesus. This is my Son, whom I love. I want you to come to know and love Him, too.”

And John the Baptist, having heard those words from the Father spoken over his cousin Jesus,  
-began immediately to join the Father in pointing Jesus out to others.  
-Even to his own disciples!

Maybe you never noticed it before, but Andrew and “the other disciple” mentioned in verse 37 are at this point in their lives disciples of John the Baptist!  
-They have gone out to the wilderness to follow and learn from John the Baptist.  
-They are committed to following him.

But John points them to Jesus and says, “He is the real deal.  
-He is the one whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.  
-He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

So these two disciples, Andrew and probably John the Gospel writer, leave John the Baptist,  
-and go to spend the day with Jesus, and they never come back.  
-They become Jesus’ disciples, and do so with John the Baptist’s blessing.

Because, you see, John's whole life and ministry were about preparing people for the coming Messiah.

-And once the Messiah had come, he wanted to point people to the Messiah, not to himself.

So he began immediately introducing people to Jesus.

As we come to the communion table today, John the Baptist wants to say to us as well, "Come and meet Jesus.

-Behold, He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

You see, John had been calling people to repentance,

-and had been baptizing people in the river as a symbol of cleansing.

-But he wanted them and he wants us to know that the True Cleanser of sin has come.

He wanted them and he wants us to know that the True Lamb of God has come.

He is the one who has truly taken away the sins of the world, by his sacrificial death on the cross once and for all.

That's what John the Baptist wants you and me to know today.

"Come meet Jesus," he says.

"The Son of the Father in heaven.

The One who has been sent into this world.

The Anointed One.

The true Lamb of God,

-who can cleanse of sin, and restore our souls, and lead us into paths of righteousness.

Come meet Jesus, the Lamb who was slain for you."

Now maybe you never knew these characteristics about Jesus,

-or maybe you have known these things about Jesus for years and years.

But maybe you still need his cleansing and forgiveness just as much as ever.

Maybe we can all hear again today what good news it is to actually meet Jesus.

- And to be introduced to the One who can take away our sin.

- To be introduced to the One who can fill us with His Spirit and re-unite us with His Father in Heaven.

- To be introduced to the One who is so amazing in all that He is, and all that He does for us,

  - that we will want to walk out those doors with Him today, -and follow Him everywhere.

Maybe we will be so taken with him, that we will take great joy in introducing Him to our friends and family, too.

“You’ve got to meet this guy Jesus,” we’ll say. “You’ve just got to meet him. Let me introduce you.”

Let’s pray.