

Sunday 23 July 2017

Otumoetai Baptist Church

John: Hello, I am Jesus

Jesus: Come and See

Have you seen Him? Do you know Him?

Hello, it's me

(SLIDE 1)

I was wondering if after all these years you'd like to meet

To go over everything

They say that time's supposed to heal ya

But I ain't done much healing

If you don't know, that's popstar Adele saying "Hello" to her millions of fans. I was fortunate enough earlier this year to *come and see* her concert with Roxy. We don't get to go to concerts much, but because we are big fans of her music, when I heard that she was coming to NZ I just thought we have to *come and see* her in concert.

And what a concert it was. For those who were also fortunate enough to go to one of the three nights she was here in NZ, you will know that it was a once in a life time experience to see her live in concert – and even more so now that she has pretty much

declared on social media that that's it as far as touring goes. Adele says 'Good bye'.

But even though her concert was so good, and she was so amazing to see live in person, it got me thinking about a couple of things. The first, who really is Adele? Is she this superstar singer with a glamorous lifestyle who can buy anything she wants and has tons of friends and is living the good life? Or is she the mum of a young child who prefers staying inside at home (or in one of her homes) rather than being in front of thousands of screaming fans at Mount Smart Stadium in Auckland or Wembley Stadium in London?

Who really is Adele?

And the second question that nagged at me a little more personally, who else would I go out of my way to come and see? Who else would I pay quite a hefty fee to go see? Who else would I book in my diary months and months beforehand to make sure I don't miss out on seeing them? As I've said, Roxy and I very rarely go to concerts (I think we've been to five or six in total), I don't go to hear comedians, I'm not really someone who follows a sports team and has to go see them live. I do enjoy movies and sometimes go out of my way to see the latest preview screening of a new movie when I can. But that's about it.

Keep those two questions in your mind:

(SLIDE 2)

Who really is Adele (or someone you follow closely) and who would you go out of your way to see?

If you were here last week you'll know that we've started a new series looking at the gospel of John. We're taking a bit of a different angle and instead of going through the stories – which we kind of will anyway – we're focusing on a person. And it's probably no surprise to you that the person we're zooming in on is Jesus.

(SLIDE 3)

Jesus is the central person of not only this gospel or the New Testament, but the entire Bible. In our Pause Remember Celebrate Service a few weeks ago we looked at God's Big Bible Story and saw how everything originates and culminates around God coming to rescue us in the person of Jesus Christ. But He not only rescues us; He gives us a new life, a new purpose, a new hope. So now we're looking at who this Jesus person really is, and how He is revealed through the Bible and especially the gospel of John.

You may ask why we are doing this ... To answer that, I think it's easy to read the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, and come away with lots of head knowledge about who Jesus is. We

know a lot of stuff about him; we know what he did; we know who he hung out with; we know some of the miracles he performed; we know he went to this Cross to pay for our sins; we know he rose from the dead.

And many people live their lives knowing a lot about Him; but the thing is it's not knowing about Jesus, it's about *knowing* Jesus. Do we truly know Him? Can we honestly say that we know him as much as we know our spouse, our children, our parents, our brother or sister, or our best friend?

So if we are to know Him, then how do we do that? Well, think about how do you get to know someone? A friend or potential spouse. You have to spend time with them. You have to get to know what they like and don't like; how they treat other people; what values they hold; how clean or messy they are; whether they are cat or dog person, a hugger or a hand-shaker. The important stuff!

It's the same with Jesus, in order to get to know Him we need to spend time with Him. Quality time. Spending an hour or so with him on a Sunday morning or Friday night is not enough to get to know him. Oh sure, you'll know plenty about him and hear all about his life, his stories and the people he impacted – but sadly you won't get to know Him. And that will be a tremendous loss.

But if that's the bad news, here's the good news! God doesn't make it hard for us to find him and get to know Him. (It's not like He's playing a heavenly game of hide and seek where he's found the most obscure place to hide and wait for us!) He's not hiding and waiting for us to come find him. He actually came to find us. Where there was no way for us to find God and know Him, He made a way. Jesus is that way. As Jesus Himself says:

(SLIDE 4)

"I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

But Jesus came to not only show us the way; he came to be our way.

He came to not only show us the truth; he came to be our truth. He came not only to show us life; he came to give us life.

And He didn't come just once two thousand years ago, promise "I'll be back" and then leave us; He came to begin a relationship with us and give us the Holy Spirit as our guide, counsellor, and comforter.

But that's getting a bit ahead of ourselves in this series so we'll come back to the start of John's gospel.

Last week Brian talked about Jesus being the Word, or the Logos (the logic, the light, the creative force), of all creation. And even

though the world back then was pretty dark and broken – and still is today - the light shone in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out! Numerous men and women and organisations have tried to defeat or darken the light of Christ, but to this day it remains bold and bright. And it will never go out. It will keep shining and illuminating the path for those who choose to follow Jesus and get to know Him.

God illuminated Jesus' path through another John – John the Baptist. John's job was very simple: to point to Jesus. It sounds like a lowly position, but it was of paramount importance. John had no ego to him; no look at me or how great I am; no messiah complex. John said to his followers, "look at Jesus, look how great he is; look at your messiah."

If you've got your Bible turn let's start at John chapter 1 verse 29.

To quickly set the scene, some Jewish authorities and leaders corner John and ask him, "Who are you?" John declares, "I am not the messiah, I'm not Elijah (an Old Testament Prophet), and I am not the prophet. I'm the messenger, lighting the path for the Lord. But my light is nothing compared to His light."

Let's pick up there, verse 29:

(SLIDE 5)

The next day John saw Jesus coming to him, and said, “There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘A man is coming after me, but he is greater than I am, because he existed before I was born.’ I did not know who he would be, but I came baptizing with water in order to make him known to the people of Israel.”

(SLIDE 6)

And John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and stay on him. I still did not know that he was the one, but God, who sent me to baptize with water, had said to me, ‘You will see the Spirit come down and stay on a man; he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen it,” said John, “and I tell you that he is the Son of God.”

Who really is Jesus? According to John, Jesus is “The lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

In other words, Jesus is the supreme sacrifice of God. The innocent lamb led to the slaughter. The one offered for us, instead of us. The one who alone can take away sin that entered the world through Adam and Eve.

Adam couldn't save us. Neither could Eve. And if we go through the rest of the Old Testament we read of people like Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and Solomon. All of them

had faith, all of them tried to live godly lives. But all of them failed and none of them could save us either.

There was only one person who could save us and that was God Himself in Jesus. Jesus is the only one without sin; the only one who can and has lived a perfect life; and the only one who is an acceptable sacrifice before a holy, righteous God who cannot accept sin in His presence.

(SLIDE 7)

Jesus is the game-changer, if you like. What do I mean? Well, when you're watching a game of rugby, netball or whatever sport, your team is down, and the coach decides to bring in the big gun, the heavy hitter. The one everyone has been waiting for who can help shift the momentum and change the result of the game. The game changer.

Jesus the game-changer. The one we've been waiting for, who changed the result for us. He changed our eternal destiny. He made a way, He is the way, to get to our heavenly Father. To see Him.

In the passage we just read, the word 'see' (or seen or saw) is used four times. This is not a mistake on John's part. It's deliberate. John is saying how important “seeing” Jesus is. So, John the Baptist *sees* Jesus coming towards him;

And he sees the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and rest on Jesus.

John says, “I’ve seen it!” In other words, “I’ve looked at this man with my own eyes. But more so than that I know Him. I know who He is and why He’s come to earth. He existed before I was born. He is the Son of God.”

(SLIDE 8)

Come and see. Look Him in the face and marvel at who this person truly is. He is the Lamb of God. He is the Son of God. He is God in human flesh.

Come and see.

Let’s keep reading. Verses 35 – 42:

(SLIDE 9)

The next day John was standing there again with two of his disciples, when he saw Jesus walking by. “There is the Lamb of God!” he said. The two disciples heard him say this and went with Jesus. Jesus turned, saw them following him, and asked, “What are you looking for?”

They answered, “Where do you live, Rabbi?” (This word means “Teacher.”)

“Come and see,” he answered. (It was then about four o’clock in the afternoon.)

(SLIDE 10)

So they went with him and saw where he lived, and spent the rest of that day with him.

One of them was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. At once he found his brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah.” (This word means “Christ.”) Then he took Simon to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, “Your name is Simon son of John, but you will be called Cephas.” (This is the same as Peter and means “a rock.”)

John the Baptist isn’t sure if the people are getting it and so he says again, “There he is people, the lamb of God!” Two of John’s followers are standing right there with him. And the next minute they’re gone! After Jesus.

Let’s stop here and put ourselves in John’s sandals for a bit. These two disciples of his – not just friends, but disciples - who had given their all to follow John and his teaching – hear John say, “There is the Lamb of God” and off they go! Not a word to John, not a “Hey John, thanks for all your input over the years, we’ve grown a lot, we’ve experienced some great things with you, I mean eating locusts and honey – amazing! – we love you John, but we’ve found someone else.” Nope, they’re just gone.

Would you feel a bit ripped off or cheated? A bit like, “hold on what just happened?” I’ve lost two of my closest disciples.

I don’t think John felt ripped off or cheated at all. As I’ve said before, he had no ego, no messiah complex, no wanting to hang on to his current church members.

Why? Because he knew his purpose. John’s purpose was to point people to Christ. How did he do that? By pointing! “There he is, the Lamb of God. Go after him guys. I’m just the curtain raiser, he’s the main attraction. He’s the one you’re looking for. The one I’ve been teaching you all about and encouraging you to wait for!”

So these two disciples go after Jesus.

(SLIDE 11)

And Jesus asks them a question, “What are you looking for?” Jesus knows exactly what they’re looking for, but he’s not into forcing a relationship with anyone, so he wants them to cut to the chase.

They answer him, “Where do you live, Rabbi (Teacher)?”

I wonder at this point if they’re asking about his earthly home – as man – or his heavenly home – as God. The point is that they

want to get to know him more. See how he works, where he lives and what he teaches.

And how does he respond? *Come and See*.

There’s that ‘Come and See’ again from our writer friend John. Must pay attention to that.

So they come and see where he lives and they spend the rest of the day with him. Imagine that! These two disciples have heard about the Saviour of the world from their teacher John for years; they know that the Messiah is to come; and now here they are with him in his house. Talk about all your dreams coming true at once.

But that’s not enough for them. They want others to know too. So Andrew goes and finds his brother Simon, “Hey bro, we’ve found the Messiah”, and Andrew brings his brother to Jesus. Jesus ‘looks’ at him and changes his name from Simon to Peter.

Jesus the name-changer.

So these two disciples and Peter come and see Jesus, they go out of their way to find him and follow Him.

Who would you go out of your way to see?

Let's keep reading, verses 43-50:

(SLIDE 12)

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come with me!" (Philip was from Bethsaida, the town where Andrew and Peter lived.) Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one whom Moses wrote about in the book of the Law and whom the prophets also wrote about. He is Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth."

"Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Nathanael asked.

(SLIDE 13)

"Come and see," answered Philip.

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, he said about him, "Here is a real Israelite; there is nothing false in him!"

Nathanael asked him, "How do you know me?"

Jesus answered, "I saw you when you were under the fig tree before Philip called you."

"Teacher," answered Nathanael, "you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

(SLIDE 14)

Jesus said, "Do you believe just because I told you I saw you when you were under the fig tree? You will see much greater things than this!"

For those of us blessed to be parents, you'll know that nothing can really prepare you for when you meet your child for the first time. Sure, you can read books, you can go to ante-natal classes, you can talk to other people, you can pray, you can imagine, you can dream – but nothing prepares you for that baby girl or boy who finally arrives.

(SLIDE 15)

She is beautiful. He is amazing. And once you see your child, that love you already have for her or him, multiplies astronomically and you hope you can protect that child and love that child with absolutely everything you have. But you first need to see that child with your own eyes.

These first disciples did everything they could to prepare for meeting the promised Messiah that their prophet Moses wrote about. They took classes, they talked about it, they prayed, they believed and hoped and waited. But nothing could truly prepare them for meeting Him face to face. They saw Jesus with their own eyes and they went "wow!" Imagine that moment when Philip locked eyes with Jesus and realised that "this is the Messiah we've been waiting for. I didn't think I'd be alive to see Him in the flesh and here he is!"

Philip runs, finds Nathaniel, and tells him that Joseph's son, Jesus, from Nazareth, is the Messiah they've been waiting for.

Nathaniel doesn't believe it. He's taken all the classes, talked to others about it, been dreaming about this day – but he needs to see him face to face.

Philip tells him, *Come and see.*

(SLIDE 16)

Nathaniel sees Jesus with his own eyes and Jesus tells him, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.” In other words, I know you Nathaniel and I know who you've been waiting for.

Nathaniel exclaims, “You are the Son of God. The King of Israel.”

And Jesus says, “Do you believe just because I told you I saw you when you were under the fig tree? You will see much greater things than this!”

Imagine those much greater things ...

(SLIDE 17)

We started this morning with two questions, which were about my experience at an Adele concert, but much more importantly are about Jesus.

The first, who really is Jesus? Jesus is the Son of God. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The acceptable sacrifice on our behalf.

The second, who would you go out of your way to see? We've seen today that the two disciples – Andrew and his buddy – as well as Peter, Philip and Nathaniel all went out of their way to see Jesus.

Would you, or have you, gone out of your way to see Him? Have you pursued him with as much tenacity and passion as these early disciples? Have you truly made him Lord of your life?

Here's the real two questions for you to think about:

(SLIDE 18)

Have you seen Him and Do you know Him?

Come and see. John the Baptist saw Jesus; Andrew and his mate saw Jesus; Philip and Nathaniel saw Jesus. They all saw him, and decided to follow him and get to know him.

We've focused on how these people came to Jesus and saw Him and we could finish right there this morning, but the truth is that this is not the important point to take away, nor is it the place to finish. We need to flip this on its head and see that in actuality it was Jesus who saw all these people first.

(SLIDE 19)

Verse 29, Jesus comes toward John. Jesus sees John first.

Verse 38, Jesus turned, saw them (the two disciples) following Him. Jesus sees them first.

Verse 42, Jesus looks at him (Simon). Jesus sees Peter first.

Verse 43, Jesus found Philip. Jesus sees Philip first.

Verse 47, Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him;

Verse 48, Jesus saw Nathaniel under the fig tree before Philip called him. Jesus sees Nathaniel first.

Jesus saw all these people, before they saw Him, and he knew them. However, **their response determined the relationship with Him**. They could both follow Him and get to know him, or they could keep going with their normal lives and wait for the Promised Messiah they had studied, talked about, prayed for, yearned and hoped for.

It's the same with us too. Jesus sees you and I, before we see Him, and he knows us. **However, our response determines the relationship with Him**. We could both follow Him and get to know Him, or we can keep going with our normal lives and wait for the Promised Messiah that we study, talk about, pray for, yearn and hope for.

(SLIDE 20)

Come and see. Jesus sees us and invites us to come and see Him. That's the invitation today. To Come and see. And it's to all people. Jesus the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the acceptable sacrifice, has invited us to come and see.

So, have you seen Him and do you know Him?

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, in this ever changing world where chaos seems to reign and there are so many things competing for our lives and attention, may we hear your invitation to come and see, and may we see you more nearly, know you more clearly, and love you more dearly in our lives.

Amen.