

Have you ever had a moment where you felt completely seen? You felt not just noticed but known. The kind of moment where someone understands something about you that you didn't even have to say out loud. For some of us, that is a beautiful feeling. For others, it's a little unsettling. Because to be fully seen means nothing is hidden, and if we're honest, most of us live somewhere in between. We want to be known, but only to a point. We reveal just enough to be liked, but not enough to be rejected.

I was reminded about a trip I took last fall to Kansas City for a retreat hosted by Text In Church, the texting service we use here at CPC. They gathered a group of long-time users, churches, and people who had been using their platform for years. Their whole mission as a company is simple: to help churches make people feel "known, noticed, and loved."

What struck me wasn't just what they said, it was what they did. They knew people's names before introductions. They remembered stories from years ago. They anticipated needs before anyone asked. They celebrated small things most of us would overlook. It wasn't loud. It wasn't flashy, but it was deeply personal. You could feel it in the room. People were not just attending an event; they were being seen.

Here is what I realized in that moment: there is something in all of us that longs to be known, noticed, and loved. But there's also something in us that's afraid of it, because if someone really sees everything, they may not like what they find. We live in a world where everyone is trying to be seen, but few people feel truly known.

It's in that tension that we're introduced to Jesus in John 1, who is not a distant figure or a surface-level Savior, but a Savior who sees beyond the surface, who knows what others miss, who looks straight into the heart. Here is what we're going to discover: Jesus sees you fully, knows you deeply, and still calls you to follow him.

Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah." They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." Finally, they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who

comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing. John 1:19-28.

You Are Not the Savior, But You Can Point to Him.

In John 1, before we ever see how Jesus sees people, we are first introduced to someone who understood his role in helping others see Jesus, John the Baptist, who had an extraordinary beginning. He was born to older parents, Zacharias, a priest, and Elizabeth, both long past the years of having children. From the start, people knew something was different about him. God had set him apart even before he was born to prepare the way for Jesus.

He lived a set-apart life as a Nazirite—devoted, disciplined, and different. But more than that, he didn't grow up in the center of religious life; he grew up in the wilderness, the Judean hill country, and not the nice, Palm Springs kind of wilderness. When I was in Israel about ten years ago, what got me was the desert. The desert where John lived was rugged, dusty, hot, scarce; the kind of place that strips life down to what really matters. It was there in the quiet, in the simplicity, that John learned to be with God. He wasn't shaped by the noise of culture or the expectations of religious systems. He was formed in the presence of God, so that when he finally steps onto the scene, he was completely different.

While the religious leaders are polished and powerful, John showed up wearing camel's hair, eating locusts and wild honey, and looking more like a prophet than anything they're used to. People can't ignore him. They are drawn to him. The crowds are gathering, and lives are being stirred. Something significant is happening. So the religious leaders come to him with a question. "Who are you?" They are not asking this question out of curiosity; it's a concern. In their world, identity mattered. If something powerful was happening, they needed to categorize it. Control it. Understand where it fits. Underneath that question is a deeper one: Who are you, really? What authority do you have to be doing all of this?

John is out in the wilderness preaching repentance, baptizing people, and people are responding. This isn't small. This is disruptive. So they start with the biggest category they know: "Are you the Messiah?" And John answers plainly: "No." They try again: "Are you Elijah?" There was this expectation that Elijah would return before the day of the Lord. John says: "No." Then: "Are you the Prophet?" A reference to someone like Moses who would come and speak for God. Again: "No."

You can almost feel their frustration building, because in their minds, there are only a few categories for someone like John, and he refuses to

fit into any of them. So finally, they ask: "Then who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us." John says something incredibly simple and incredibly freeing: "I am a voice..."

John doesn't build his identity around titles. He doesn't elevate himself. He defines himself by his role in relation to Jesus. "I'm just a voice." Not the Word. Not the Logos. Not the Savior. Not the center. Just a voice pointing to someone else. And this is where it starts to press in on us, because we live in a world that constantly asks, "Who are you?" We answer with our job, title, relationships, success, and failures. We build identities around things we hope will hold. But John shows us something radically different. Your identity is clearest when it's connected to Jesus.

Then the Pharisees ask another question. "Why are you baptizing if you're not the Messiah, Elijah, or the Prophet?" That's not a random question. Baptism already existed in the Jewish world, but not like this. On that day, baptism was primarily used for Gentiles—non-Jews—who wanted to convert to Judaism. It was a symbolic washing. A way of saying, "I'm leaving my old life behind and I'm stepping into something new." It was about cleansing, repentance, and a fresh start. But here's what makes John's baptism so shocking, he's calling Jewish people to be baptized. People who already thought they were in. People who already had the right background, identity, and religious system.

John is essentially saying: "That's not enough. You don't just need heritage, you need transformation. I'm preparing you for the One who can actually change you." That would have been offensive because it levels the playing field. It says that everyone needs repentance. Everyone needs renewal. Everyone needs to prepare their heart. So when they ask, "Why are you baptizing?" They're really asking, "Who gave you the authority to call us to this?" In other words, "What gives you the right to do this?"

John answers: "I baptize with water...but among you stands one you do not know." That line is loaded. "Among you stands one you do not know." He's saying that they were looking for the Messiah and he was already here. They were asking questions, analyzing, and trying to figure it out when he was standing right in front of them, and they didn't even recognize him. That's sobering. Because it means it's possible to be close to the things of God, familiar with spiritual language, asking the right questions, and still miss Jesus.

Then John says, "The one who comes after me...I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal." In that culture, that was the work of the lowest servant. And John says, "I'm not even worthy to do that for him." You see clarity, humility, and freedom in John the Baptist. He knows exactly who he is because he knows exactly who he is not. That's where this begins for us. Before we can fully receive the truth that Jesus sees us fully, knows us deeply, and still calls us to follow him, we have to release the pressure of trying to be something we were never meant to be.

Then Jesus shows up. Not in a dramatic entrance. Not with fanfare or announcement. Jesus is just walking toward him, and everything John has been preparing for comes into focus in a single moment.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One." John 1:29-34.

Jesus Deals with What You can't.

And then the next day, everything shifts. John is standing there, and he sees Jesus coming toward him. And he says, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Let's not rush past that. In one sentence, John tells us who Jesus is and what He came to do. That phrase, "Lamb of God," would have immediately meant something to everyone listening. This is sacrificial language. It would take them back to the Passover lamb in Exodus, where blood marked the people of God and death passed over them. The sacrificial system, in which a lamb was offered again and again for sin.

Isaiah 53, the suffering servant, led like a lamb to the slaughter. John says that all of that pointed to Jesus. This isn't just theology. This is deeply personal because what does the Lamb do? It takes away the sin of the world. The lamb does not manage it, ignore it, or minimize it. The Lamb takes it away. Sin is anything in us that separates us from God—what we've done, what's been done to us, and the brokenness we carry.

Last week, Josh described sin, at its roots, as disordered loves, whether we love ourselves, work, power, money, sex, drugs, or alcohol over God. We put our trust in these things rather than in God. We put our identity in these things rather than in God. Jesus doesn't just see your life; he sees your sin. The parts we hide. The parts we justify. The parts we hope no one ever finds out about. What's staggering is he sees it fully, and instead of stepping back, he steps forward toward you and me. He steps forward toward the cross. He didn't just expose sin, he carried it. Notice that it says the sin of the world, not just Israel, the religious, the people who have it together, but the world. That means this is for everyone, anyone who will come.

Then John continues: "This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who has surpassed me, because he was before me.'" John is reminding them that Jesus may have come after me in time, but he existed long before him. This is a statement about Jesus' eternity. Then he says something very important. "I myself did not know him." Not that he didn't recognize him as a person, but he didn't fully understand who he was until God revealed it.

John says that he saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. This is the moment of confirmation. The Spirit

doesn't just come and go; it remains. Don't miss that word, remained. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God would come upon people for a moment, a task, and a season, then it would lift. We see it with kings. We see it with prophets. The Spirit came, and the Spirit went. But here, something is different. The Spirit doesn't just come upon Jesus; it remains. It stays. It abides. It rests on him permanently.

This is John's way of saying that Jesus is not just empowered by the Spirit, he is uniquely one with the Spirit. There is no separation or temporary anointing. This is confirmation of Jesus' identity. Everything Jesus is about to do, every miracle, word, and act of compassion flows out of this ongoing, unbroken relationship with the Spirit.

This matters for us, because the One who fully sees you, the One who fully knows you, is not distant. He is filled with the very presence of God. And God had told John that the one on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain; this is the one. John ends with this declaration: "I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." This is no longer just preparation. John sees the Spirit; he knows! This isn't a guess or a feeling; this is a proclamation and a confirmation.

Here's what this means for us. Jesus is not just a teacher to admire or a leader to follow. He is the Lamb who takes away your sin. The thing you try to hide the most, the thing you carry the most shame about, Jesus already sees it fully. And instead of rejecting you, he chooses to take it on himself. Jesus doesn't just see your life; he came to redeem what's broken in it. Once you see that, once you begin to understand who Jesus is and what he came to do, the natural question becomes, How do you respond? What do you do with a Savior like this?

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went to see where he was staying and spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter). John 1:35-42

Come and See Before You Think You Have It All Figured Out.

The next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. He looks at Jesus and says, "Behold, the Lamb of God." This time, something different happens. The two disciples hear him, and they start following Jesus. Jesus turns, sees them, and asks: "What do you want?" That's his first question. Not, "Do you understand everything?" Not, "Do you have your life together?" But "What are you looking for?" They want to know where Jesus is staying. Jesus says, "Come and see." That is the invitation.

It is not a lecture, a list of requirements, but an invitation to come and see.

They spend the day with him. We don't know everything that was said, but we know it changed them. Because Andrew leaves that moment and goes straight to his brother, Simon, and says, "We have found the Messiah!" He brings him to Jesus. Jesus looks at Simon and says, "You are Simon, you will be called Cephas," which means Peter. Don't miss that Jesus sees who Simon is and who he will become. This is how following Jesus works. You don't have to have everything figured out. You don't leap into full maturity overnight. You just take a step closer.

I love Mount Hermon's youth ministry philosophy! It is simple; help students take one step closer to Jesus, not ten steps, perfection, or having all the answers. Just one step closer, and that's exactly what we see here. These first disciples didn't have it all figured out. They didn't have a full theology. They didn't know how the story would end. They just took a step and followed, stayed, and moved closer.

For some of you, that is the invitation today. It is not about having everything solved or every doubt answered, but about taking your next step, because that's how transformation begins. One step closer leads to another and another, and before you know it, you are walking with Jesus. For some of you, it's saying yes to Jesus. For others, it's coming back after drifting. For others, it's letting someone actually know you.

The next day, Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. John 1:43-46.

Someone Invited You, Now You Invite Others

The next day, Jesus calls Philip, and what does Philip do? He goes and finds Nathanael. He tells him that he had found the one Moses wrote about. Nathanael responds with some skepticism: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" That's like saying, "Can anything good come out of Milpitas?" I love Philip's response. He doesn't argue or try to win a debate. He simply says: "Come and see."

We talked about this on the Podcast this week. It's a non-pressured invitation. That's how the Gospel of Jesus spreads. One person telling another person to come and see this for themselves. If you're here today, there's a good chance that's your story. Someone invited you. Someone pointed you toward Jesus. Someone created space for you to encounter Jesus. In fact, when we ask people how they first heard about CPC, the number one answer is that a friend invited them, or someone told them about it.

The second most common answer is finding us through a Google search. That tells us that technology and websites matter, but nothing replaces a personal invitation. Because at the end of the day, people are far more likely to come and see when someone they trust says, "I think you'd love

this, come sit with me." Who is your person in your life that is curious, searching, skeptical, or just needs a place to belong? You don't have to have all the answers. You don't have to say it perfectly. You just have to say: "Come and see."

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel." Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man." John 1:47-51

You Are Fully Seen And Still Called.

And that invitation leads us to one of the most personal moments in this passage, because Nathanael is about to discover something that changes everything. As Nathanael approaches, Jesus says, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no deceit." Nathanael is caught off guard. "How do you know me?" And Jesus answers, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree."

Now, at first glance, that might not sound like much to us. But in the Jewish world, the fig tree carried meaning. It was often a place of peace, reflection, and prayer. In the Old Testament, sitting under your fig tree was a picture of rest, security, and being known and at peace before God. So when Jesus says, "I saw you under the fig tree." He's not just saying, "I noticed where you were sitting." He's saying: I saw you in a private moment. I saw you when no one else did. I saw you as you really are before God.

Some scholars even suggest that people would sit under fig trees to pray, meditate on Scripture, and wrestle with God. We don't know exactly what Nathanael was doing, but we do know that this was personal and specific enough that Nathanael instantly recognized it was more than observation; it was revelation. This is why Nathanael responds so quickly, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God." Because in that moment, he realizes Jesus didn't just see him, he knew him.

Recently, I was in Cabo with my dear college friend, Alexandra, who joined me on the CPC Podcast a few episodes ago. She had just returned to the States after spending two years running an orphanage in the Philippines, and Cabo was our last trip together before she headed home to New Zealand. She was missing the kids one evening and decided to Facetime them. There's a distance, thousands of miles, between them. Different time zones. Different worlds, really. But as soon as the screen lights up and the kids gather around, everything changed. She started calling them out by name—Hi Rico! Hi Sky, there you are, I see you! You could see it in their faces. They lit up. Because it's not just a generic call; it's not just, 'Hey, kids. It's personal and direct. It's: I see you. I know you. You matter to me. Her love for these kids reflected on her face.

Here's what this means for you. Jesus sees you, not just the public parts of your life, but the private ones. The quiet moments, the questions, the struggles, the prayers you've whispered, or maybe stopped praying. The parts of your life you show everyone and the parts you hide from everyone. He sees your doubts, fears, struggles, and story and doesn't turn away. He leans in. And just like those kids lit up when they heard, "I see you," Jesus is saying the same thing to you. And honestly, I think he has the same joy on his face that Alexandra did because he sees you fully, knows you deeply, and still calls you to follow him. That is the tension we live in. We want to be known, but we're afraid of what happens if we are. Jesus steps right into that space and says, "I already know, and I'm still inviting you."

Jesus said to Nathanael: "You will see greater things than these...You will see heaven opened." This is a reference to Jacob's ladder in the Old Testament, in Genesis 28, when a man named Jacob had a dream in which he saw a ladder reaching from heaven to earth with angels ascending and descending it. When Jacob wakes up, he says, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I didn't even know it." That moment was about connection. A connection between heaven and earth. Between God and humanity.

Here is what Jesus is saying to Nathanael, "That ladder Jacob saw, that connection he dreamed about, it's not a place. It's not a vision. It's Me." Jesus is saying, "I am the meeting place between heaven and earth. I am where God comes down and where humanity is brought near. I am the connection you've been longing for." Don't miss how this connects to everything we've been talking about. The One who sees you fully, the One who knows you deeply, is the same One who makes a way for you to be fully known by God. Here is the reality. On our own, there is a gap between who we are and who God is. A gap between our brokenness and his holiness. We don't climb that ladder. We don't build that bridge. Jesus is the bridge. He doesn't just point the way to God; he is the way.

What Nathanael was being invited into was bigger than a moment of being seen; it was a life of being connected to God through Jesus. The One who sees you is the One who brings you home. So whatever you are looking for or have been searching for can be found in Jesus! The One who sees you fully is the same One who makes a way for you to be fully known by God. If all of this is true, if Jesus really sees you, knows you, and still calls you, then this isn't just something to understand, it's something to respond to.

Release the Pressure to Be Everything.

You don't have to be the answer for everyone. You're not the Savior, you don't have to fix every situation, and you don't have to carry what only Jesus can carry. Ask yourself where you are trying to be what only Jesus can be? What would it look like this week to point instead of perform?

Stop Hiding What Jesus Already Sees.

We spend so much energy managing what people see. But Jesus already sees it all—every fear, failure, and struggle and he's not stepping back. He continues to love you. What are you still trying to hide, minimize, or manage? What would it look like to bring that into the light before

Jesus? This is what confession is. Confession is not about shame; it is about freedom. Freedom is the ability to stop pretending, receive God's forgiveness, and live in the light without fear. It is the honest act of saying, "Jesus, this is what is true about me, and I trust you with it."

When we bring our sins, wounds, and burdens into the light, we no longer have to carry them alone. You don't confess so you can fix yourself, you confess so Jesus can carry what you were never meant to carry. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Take Your Next Step—Not Every Step.

Spiritual growth doesn't happen all at once. It happens one step at a time. What is your next step, and will you take it? Is it saying yes to Jesus for the first time, a confession of sin, getting into the community, serving, or re-engaging when you've drifted? Don't overcomplicate it, just take one step closer.

Be the Invitation for Someone Else.

Most people don't come to faith through arguments. They come through relationships. Who is your person? Is it the friend who's asking questions, the coworker who's going through something, or the neighbor who just needs a place to belong. You don't need the perfect words. Just say, "Come and see."

Live Like You Are Already Known and Loved.

This shifts everything. You're not striving to be seen. You already are. What would change if you actually lived like that was true? Would there be less proving and performing and more freedom and honesty?

So here's where this lands for us. Jesus sees you, fully. Not the version you present, the real you. He knows your story, doubts, and struggles. The things you carry that no one else sees. He doesn't step back. He steps toward you. He takes what you can't carry. He calls you into something new, and he invites you to follow. Not when you have it all together. Not when you've figured everything out. Jesus is saying the same thing my friend Alexandra said to those children—I see you.

This is the good news we've been walking through: Jesus sees you fully, knows you deeply, and still calls you to follow him.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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