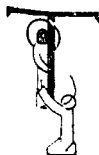


‘COME AND SEE’

BY

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The next day John saw Jesus coming to him and he saith, Behold the Lamb of God . . . Come and see . . . they came and saw where he abode and they stayed with him that day’. (St John I, 29.)



HIS is a most winning scene. We have here a wonderful picture of St John the Baptist—‘than whom no greater prophet ever arose’—we have, of course, a study of his wonderful humility you feel that he is kindred to our blessed Lord. It is a striking thing that our blessed Lord shows his love of St John the Baptist by sometimes using the very phrases that St John used. St Mark shows us that our blessed Lord did not begin to preach the kingdom of God until John was in prison (Mark 1, 14). It is a very beautiful thing that Jesus seemed to place himself as successor of St John. He used the same phrases—and as it were preached the same sermons—a very beautiful thing. Our blessed Lord’s humility is so courteous, so delicate, not always obvious but very beautiful when you come upon it. Like the lark’s nest, a bit difficult to find but well worth finding. You have this lovely scene which you can think about for a year or two. Things that are worth thinking about are worth thinking about for a long time.

The disciples *hear John* speak and they *follow Jesus*. That, of course, might be a model for all preachers; we *can* preach the best of sermons (a good life)—we all preach more or less, some more than others, and these sermons are very persuasive. (It is sermons like mine that are not much use for it is my duty to talk, and my other duty of following what I talk is very different and very difficult). . . . I wonder if it can be said of us as it was said of John, that they heard *him*, and *followed Jesus*? How wonderful that would be. We all make a little noise from time to time. How wonderful it would be if they said, ‘Well, you know, you can’t hear Father Vincent without thinking of Jesus’ (I only use my own name because I can’t remember names of other people.) And they heard him. His own disciples whom he had trained, they were very specially trained novices. And when they had finished their simple novitiate they made their Profession with Jesus. Now if you will think about that for about thirty years you will see how wonderful it is. Sometimes we do not seem to see

¹ From a retreat preached at St Dominic’s Priory, Stone.

much in these things at first. But they are the words of inspired Scripture, about Jesus! They are principles, not just little facts; not spiritual gossip, but great principles. You may not see them for a year or two, but never mind, just go on, study and *think*. Things come tumbling in when you get to my age, and you see amazing things, wonderful things. When I get hold of these things, I hardly know how to go on—which is rather tiring to the listener.

Now I really want to talk about St John and St Andrew. I sometimes meditate on the charming relations between the two families of Peter and John. There is a friendship between Andrew and John and they at once begin to follow our Lord. And our Lord turns round most courteously and asks them, 'What seek you?' How very beautiful. We shall see later on Jesus says much the same to Mary Magdalen. It is a favourite phrase of God's. What are you looking for? Of course I presume you and I ought to be looking for something. You see this world is a sort of looking-place. We are always looking, and when a person is looking for something you can generally tell. They have that look, as if they were looking for something. You see a person distracted for about ten minutes and then you find they are looking for something—looking for their glasses! You ask 'what is Father Vincent looking for?' Oh—his glasses. Now Jesus is just like that; he turns round most sweetly, 'What are you looking for?'—and with the greatest possible inconsequence they do not answer his question. We rarely do answer God's questions. Instead they ask another. And God understands that. It is almost like little boys and girls meeting each other for the first time. 'Where do you live?' He would naturally say 'I ought to be living in your heart—it is my choice place. I have several places where I abide—Come and see!'

Our blessed Lord is irresistible, you know. I sometimes say terrible, almost frightening things to people—that I have to call them back to Jesus. I frighten them with Calvary, with the Crucifixion. But you can face anything in the world if you 'Come and see' where he abides. They have never seen him before. I was going to say it was love at first sight . . . love unto death. I do not know where he was staying; I think by that time he had left Nazareth. This was not Nazareth and he had no home of his own. He was staying at some shack somewhere. If it was with St John the Baptist, probably it would be in some tent—come along and see!

Of course a welcome does not consist of a place, it consists of a person. When people begin to think of homes as buildings homes begin to die. The home consists of love, love of parents for their children and love of children for their parents. *Now* of course, this is largely gone.

You can just imagine this beautiful thing: 'Where dost thou dwell?' and he says to them simply, 'Come and see'. He invited them at once. 'And they stayed with him that day'. I feel inclined to think that when St John met his mother, she, no doubt a stickler for manners, would say, I imagine, Staying all that time, have you no manners? And I can quite imagine St John would explain how it was he stayed so long: We could not get away. He was so winning. Blessed be that soul that cannot get away from Jesus!

I wish you all knew Greek. I just know it sufficiently well to see the wonderful beauties we do *not* see in English. I do not see why people should not learn a little Greek and talk it while they are scrubbing floors and things like that. I should not be a bit surprised if talking Greek was not just as much to the purpose as talking often is when people are scrubbing floors. If from time to time, say, from 11 to 12, we spoke nothing but Greek. Thanks be to Almighty God, we can all say our prayers in Greek. We all ask God's mercy in Greek: '*Kyrie Eleison*'.

The beautiful thing you have here is the original Greek word for 'where dwellest thou?'—*hou meneis?* There is almost no word so frequent in the whole Gospel of St John. It is sometimes translated 'dwell' and sometimes 'stay, remain, abide . . . 'Come and see where he abode'. It is that same beautiful word St John uses in the end, a word which had seared itself into his mind. (St John 14: 11, 17, 25; 15: 4.) 'Abide (*meinate*) in me and I in you'. (15: 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 16; 21: 22, 23.) A most wonderful word. 'I will *abide* in you'. I love the English word 'abide'—still used in the south-west country: 'Where do you bide?' And that beautiful expression used to a little one: 'Bide quiet'. I think there is no other word in English that will do as well as 'abide'. Where do you abide? And he said 'Come and see'; and they abode there for the rest of the day. They stayed there. It is one of the most mystical words. A whole retreat could be given on the word 'abide'—the highest mysticism. God should come and abide in our hearts. He should *stay*—his presence should be continued. He should be at home there, our hearts should be his temple, his abode!

So we hear our Lord replying to them. God first asks the question to the soul and the soul answers. He does something first. You remember when the Angel first spoke to our blessed Lady, she replied with a question: 'How?'

They answered with a question and it was the right question: 'Master, where dwellest thou?' They did not answer his question directly, but, as it were, in a higher way; they wanted to see the place that would be fitting for his abode. You cannot take your mind

off the loveliness of our blessed Lord in this scene. The exquisite courteousness of it—even if his abode was some little tent or some tumble-down place in a little village. You can think of his courteousness that would not let them tear themselves away from him. They stayed that day. Probably he had to dismiss them in the end, for it was his hour of mystic prayer with the Father. There would be some beautiful way in which he perhaps conducted them back to their own place where they were staying. All that should mean much for our individual souls. It should be a model first of all to us because some souls may approach us and follow after us. Sometimes in a tiresome way. And we should get from this kindness of our Lord some of that divinely-human, humanly-divine courteousness, that sweetness, that graciousness.

You cannot imagine our blessed Lord winning souls of the character of St John without there being something extraordinarily gracious about him—full of grace. That is graciousness, the charm that gives a perfect unselfish dedication to the service of others. That gives great charm to character, but beneath that charm there ought to be strength. Charm should not be a cover for weakness. I think there are few things so Christ-like and so divine in the world as graciousness. We want something to abide in; we can abide in that lovely Presence. The soul may consider itself even alone with God. You can consider that what he said to those two chosen disciples he has said to you. We are practically under the same roof as the blessed Sacrament. We need not ask our blessed Lord where does he dwell. He has pitched his tent near ours. Our only thought should be, are we giving him a sufficient welcome? In our prayer do we beseech him to stay with us, to dwell in us? 'Stay with us, Lord'. '*Meinon meth'hemon oti pros hesperan estin kai kekliken ede he hemera*. Stay with us for it is towards evening and the day is now far spent'. (St Luke 24:29). There is just the frightening thought that whilst love still allows us our power of freedom, our free-will, *we* might not always stay with him. We might not! Let us ask him to give us that grace of staying with him until he comes. . . .