

# Reflection for January 18 – 2026 - The Great Invitation

## Inspired by John 1:29-42

This Gospel story follows on the heels of Jesus' Baptism and the epiphany when John declares; ***“the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son,<sup>[a]</sup> full of grace and truth.”*** We find those words just a little earlier in Chapter 1 of John's writings. Other gospel accounts such as Matthew share this account when God speaks the familiar words, ***“This is my Son, the Beloved,<sup>[a]</sup> with whom I am well pleased.”***

This is a celebration of the Incarnation of Jesus. And in “churchy” speak, it is a time we talk about incarnational theology, the idea that we are to be Christ in the world.<sup>1</sup> It's the time of a great invitation.

In today's passage, Jesus is recognized in the streets, John the Baptist knows him and exclaims, ***“I myself have seen and have testified that this is the son of God.”*** John and two of his companions follow Jesus and when he notices, Jesus asks them what they were looking for. They reply with the inquiry, ***“where are you staying?”*** “Come and see,” responds Jesus.

There is an invitation, “come and see,” and it is the precursor to the discipleship recruitment. Soon Jesus will have his full compliment of twelve dedicated followers.

I think it is important to recognize why they came. Unlike Peachland United Church, Jesus couldn't offer fabulous music and there were no voices to sing the great hymns. We don't hear anything about great fellowship with treats. We don't even know if Jesus offered an inspirational message with a few tasteful jokes thrown in such as you experience here. We get nada.

The story is a little different in other gospel accounts such as Matthew when Jesus is walking on the beach on the sea of Galilee. But the outcome to invitation is the same. Jesus simply asks fishermen to follow him, and they do.

Come and see. And as if Jesus was some sort of giant magnet, they are drawn to him. The invitation is accepted. They must quench their thirst for the truth. Is this man really the chosen one, the messiah, the one who can free us from the chains of human, social and political bondage? We must find out.

Later their instincts would be proven correct. Jesus' healing acts, his dogged determination for justice and his compassion for the commoner would fundamentally change the world. The “proof of the pudding” as it were, was the incentive. “The Messiah has arrived, praise be to God, we are saved from captivity and oppression.”

The dream was however short lived. Repressive, authoritative and deceitful events perpetrated by the ego of the misguided brought back reality. One man, even the son of God, could not singularly stamp out evil.

Which I don't think was ever the point. God didn't send a superhero to cleanse the earth of all the bad actors. The God we know doesn't act in that way. Since the dawn of creation humanity has been given the freedom to live as we choose to live. Our maker is not an interventionist that strikes down wickedness, replacing it with peace and understanding. Some still believe God has a plan for all the chaos we are in. Some think God is in control.

Boldly I believe that to be folly. And I believe that is why fewer and fewer of our friends and neighbours do not accept our invitation, an invitation to “come and see.”

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Y. Nishioka, Feasting on The Word, Year A, Volume 1, p. 260

Our invitation is an “open-ended” offer to come in and see where God really lives. It is an invitation to tell the story that God is very much alive and very relevant. It is an invitation to welcome the inquirer, honour our differences, park our political views and put aside our likes and dislikes.

Our invitation is to come and find that the healing stories of the man called Jesus are true. We “see” and “walk” differently within a caring community. We experience renewal and rebirth through pastoral relationships, fellowship connections and volunteer activities. And in prayer we grow to understand the life-giving presence of Holy Love. When we leave, we know of its persistence, because we experience it.

“Where are you staying?” Jesus was asked. He didn’t provide an answer. He didn’t say just down the road at a B and B or the local Village Inn. He didn’t say, “I’m away down at the end of town in a barn very much like the one I was born in.” Jesus just said, “come and see.”

Shouldn’t that be the invitation of every loving and caring community of faith? Come in and see. Come in and see and you might be surprised at what you encounter.

We won’t judge you here. You are welcome wherever you come from and wherever you may be headed. When you come through those front doors you will be greeted enthusiastically.

During your time with us, just relax and be who you need to be. If your situation moves you to tears, that is OK. If you want to shout out a Hallelujah, go ahead. Please sing out loud or be totally silent, it is up to you.

We offer a prayer time. When we do that know that we are holding you in our collective hearts, loving you even though we don’t call out your name, even though we may be perfect strangers. While you are with us we promise not to tell you what to believe or give you any kind of instruction on how you should live your faith.

We get together after our service to celebrate our fellowship. It is like a large family gathering where we chat and share our encounters. We would honour your presence there. If you need a pastoral moment, we can arrange that.

I know there are a few subtle sign changes we want to make outside. At least I recall an email to that effect. I wonder if one of them might be a name change. What do you think about “Come and See” United? Now that would be an invitation.

“Come and See” for Jesus was “come and follow me.” Implied was “we are going to work together to change the world. We are going to speak out for the disenfranchised, boldly declare equality for all men, women and children. We are going to resist evil by calling attention to it. We are going to offer healing through compassion. We are going to forgive others when they have wronged us and ask for forgiveness when we have made mistakes. We are going to treat others as we would like to be treated. And we are going to love unconditionally.”

The invitation is an open one. Come in and see, see who we are and know that you are one among us. Come in and see where God lives and be part of Jesus in action.

Thanks for listening this morning. Ian