

Bill Bryson traveled to Hannibal, Missouri, to visit the boyhood home of author, Mark Twain. The house was a "trim, white-washed house with green shutters, set in the middle of downtown." It cost two dollars to walk around the site. Bryson found the house a disappointment. *"It claimed to be a faithful reproduction of the original interiors,"* he writes, *"but there were wires and water sprinklers in every room. I also very much doubt that young Samuel Clemens' bedroom had Armstrong vinyl on the floor or that his sister's bedroom had a plywood partition in it."* The house is owned by the city of Hannibal and attracts 135,000 visitors each year. Bryson was disappointed that he wasn't able to actually go inside the house. *"You look through the windows,"* he says. *At each window there is a recorded message telling about each room. As he proceeded from window to window, he asked another tourist. "What do you think of it?"* The friendly stranger replied, *"Oh, I think it's great. I come here whenever I'm in Hannibal" two, three times a year. Sometimes I go out of my way to come here."* Dumbfounded, Bryson replied, *"Really?" "Yeah,"* answered the stranger. *"I must have been here twenty, thirty times by now. This is a real shrine, you know."*

They walked and talked some more. Bryson's last question to the man was, *"Would you say the house is just like Twain described it in his books?" "I don't know,"* the stranger said. *"I've never read one of his books."*

**Visiting his shrine" but ignoring his books.** Doubtless there are many followers of Jesus who are satisfied with that same superficial approach. They visit his shrine but never read his teachings. Some of us, though, want to go farther. Some of us want to know Jesus, not just as an interesting historical figure, but as the living Son of God.

**SO, HOW DO WE FIND JESUS?** That is the question for the morning. How do we find him? Let me suggest **(3) WAYS.**

**#1. Sometimes we find him through a DRAMATIC "ACT" OF REVELATION.** It doesn't happen that way for too many of us, but sometimes *God breaks into people's lives in a clear, unmistakable ACT.* That's what happened to John the Baptist.

At first, John did not recognize Jesus. Even though they were cousins, he did not really know who Jesus was until the day Jesus came to the Jordan to be baptized. It was then that the heavens opened and the Spirit descended like a dove and rested on Jesus. Sometimes it happens that way. **Something dramatic things happens and our lives are transformed.**

Working in a small town in Latin America, a woman felt despair. She was experiencing marital problems, as well as conflicts with people she worked with. Without warning, an earthquake struck one day. In those moments of panic and fear she ran with other people to the safety of a garden plaza as buildings shattered and dust billowed. *"For those moments I saw everything so clearly,"* she recalls. I realized "how I could become so much kinder to my husband, how other relationships could work out in my life. *In an "instant" and with such "gratitude" I saw how it would be so easy for me to turn things around.* In that dramatic moment this woman had glimpsed how the brokenness in her life could be mended. At that moment she saw clearly how she could bring about healing in her life. *At that moment it was as if God had spoken to her in a most dramatic way.*

God had told John in a personal epiphany, *"He on whom you see the spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit."* When John saw the Spirit descend upon Jesus in the form of a dove, he knew without a doubt that Jesus was the Messiah. John believed that day because of a **PERSONAL MOMENT-AN "ACT" OF GOD.**

Sometimes that happens to people. The truth of God comes into their lives in such a dramatic fashion that they can scarcely deny that they have been in His presence. *That's one way of finding Jesus.*

**#2. Another way of finding him is through the "WITNESS OF OTHERS."** A day later, John the Baptist sees Jesus approaching and exclaims, *"Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* Two of John's followers hear John's witness, and they begin to follow Jesus, not because of any dramatic vision they had, but because they trusted John.

**My guess is that this is the way most of us came to Christ, THROUGH THE WITNESS OF OTHERS.**

It may have been our parents or our spouse or a strong personality who made an “PERMANENT” impression on us, a person whom we trusted, who made a vast difference in our lives.

A 9-year-old girl named Erica was so filled with joy when she came to know Jesus that she insisted that all her friends know him too. One day she took her Pastor to her neighborhood to invite the children to a vacation bible school her church was having. We went with colorful flyers in hand. The Pastor was expecting that they would tell the children and their parents about the dates and time and place of the vacation bible school, leave them a flyer as a reminder, and be on our way. **Erica saw our job differently.** When we got to the first home and the door was opened, she stepped right up and said, *"We've got great news about Jesus and my pastor will tell you all about it."* The Pastor stood there flabbergasted, but she was right. ***Our job was primarily to spread the Word, proclaim the Good News, and tell others about our Risen Lord.*** Erica and her Pastor worked hard that day because she did not want any child in her neighborhood to miss out in hearing about Jesus and the vacation bible school. Erica knew in her own way, Jesus' claim on our lives and the magnitude of that claim. **We are Jesus' witnesses and those who need to receive our witness is the entire human family.**

**It is clear that this YOUNG Erica AND HER PASTOR had a major effect on many that summer.** That has been true for many of us. We have found Christ through the witness of others, Sunday School teachers, kindly neighbors, most importantly, devout parents. **Their witness made the critical difference in our Christian pilgrimage.**

**#3. Finally, THERE ARE THOSE WHO FINALLY DISCOVER CHRIST WHILE LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.** Did you hear that? Yes, “There are “Christians who finally discover Christ while living the Christian Life!!!”

Because of John's witness, the two men who were with him wanted to find out more about Jesus. Notice up to this point that Jesus has not said a word. He has not preached a sermon, nor told a parable. ***These two men begin to follow him simply because of the witness of John the Baptist.*** Jesus noticed them following him and asked them what they were seeking. They replied that they wanted to know more about him. Jesus issued the personal invitation, **"Come and see."** And they did. They stayed with him all day. They became his disciples. **Today, Jesus Christ issues the same invitation to other would-be followers, "Come and see."**

Two months before his assassination, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke to his congregation at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta about his death in what would oddly enough become his eulogy.

***"Every now and then I think about my own death, and I think about my own funeral," Dr. King told his congregation. "If any of you are around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral. And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy, tell them not to talk too long. Every now and then I wonder what I want them to say. Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize, that isn't important. Tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred other awards, that's not important. I'd like someone to mention that day that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to give his life serving others. I'd like someone to say that day that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to love somebody. I want you to be able to say that day that I did try to feed the hungry. I want you to be able to say that day that I did try, in my life, to clothe those who were naked. I want you to be able to say that I did try to visit those in prison. I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity." Dr. King concluded with these words: "I won't have any money left behind. I won't have the fine and luxurious things of life to leave behind. But I just want to leave a committed life behind."***

Did Martin King have that level of commitment when he first began his ministry? It's doubtful. He had youthful enthusiasm to be sure. He had strong convictions. He was well brought up, with an outstanding Baptist preacher as a father. But people who are truly captured by the spirit of Christ do so generally after years of walking in Christ's footsteps. **Our faith is validated and grows because we accept Christ's invitation to... "COME & SEE."**

**Most here today has been raised in the church.** There never had been that one moment when the heavens opened and we saw the spirit descend. Yet we have walked with Jesus since we took our first tiny steps as small children. Our faith is just as real as those who have more dramatic stories to tell. **We are those who have a "COME & SEE" faith.**

**Regardless of how we find Christ, our JOB, is to provide a special kind of WITNESS so that others may find him too.** One of the two men who followed Jesus that day was a fisherman named Andrew. The day Andrew spent with Jesus changed his life. He went to find his brother Simon who was also a fisher. Andrew told his brother, *"We have found the Messiah."* Perhaps Andrew had never been so excited about anything in his life as he was that day. Simon looked into his brother's eyes and knew he was sincere. Simon wanted to meet this teacher that his brother was so excited about. **Andrew took his brother to meet Jesus.**

When they found him, Jesus looked at Simon and said, *"You are Simon, son of John. You are to be called Cephas."* We know Simon or Cephas as Peter, leader of the early church. **Peter became a disciple of Jesus thanks to the witness of his brother, Andrew. History would never be the same again.**

**YOU BECAME A DISCIPLE OF JESUS THANKS TO THE WITNESS OF WHO? \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank). History will never be the same again.**

**Now what will you do so HISTORY WILL CONTINUE FOR THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST?**

William Willimon, professor at Duke Divinity School, remembers when a friend of his visited the Soviet Union in the 1970s. Upon his return he announced that the church behind the Iron Curtain was mostly *"irrelevant because the only people there are little old ladies."* Dr. Willimon writes, "Looking back now at the collapse of communism, the difficulties of rebuilding the Soviet Union after a long period of spiritual bankruptcy, I hope my friend would now say, *"Thank God for the little old ladies."* Their existence provided a continuing, visible, political rebuke to the Soviets."

**It would be wonderful if our WITNESS was as POWERFUL as that of those "LITTLE OLD LADIES."**

**It would be wonderful if our WITNESS, like Andrew's, was POWERFUL enough to challenge another Simon Peter who is among us TODAY!!**

**TODAY, Your CHALLENGING TASK is to find others who will "COME & SEE" the GLORY & WONDER found in BOTH the Savior & his WORD!! Amen.**