

Building the Bridge Between The Blind Man and Lazarus

“Come and See” is a phrase used throughout John’s Gospel. “Rabbi, where are you staying, asked the first disciples, when Jesus walked by.” His response: “Come and see.” And they did.

The second wave of disciples included Philip, who went to find his brother Nathanael, and told him about Jesus. Nathanael questioned if anything good could come from that worthless place Nazareth. Philip said, “Come and see”.

Nicodemus went to see for himself, and left still in the dark.

The Samaritan Woman saw Jesus at the well, and then went to tell her neighbors and community members who she saw, and invited them to “come and see” for themselves.

Last week, the Blind Man who couldn’t see, ended up being the one who could see Jesus, while those who could see were left blind.

Seeing is believing, the saying goes, but what about hearing? Each of these people had to hear the “Voice” and respond to it.

Hearing Jesus speak or call out to us as the “Voice of the Good Shepherd” is what Chapter 10 is about. It is not those who think they are part of the “right” sheep fold, going through the motions, rituals, attending church, checking off a religious “do’s and dont’s” list. It is those who hear Christ true voice, and follow him whether they are seen as being in the church or not.

Call and response is also a theme in each of our past stories about Jesus. The same is so today, in the story of the raising of Lazarus.

Jesus has an intimate relationship with Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary. Some scholars suggest that Lazarus is the unnamed “Disciple whom Jesus Loved” or “Beloved Disciple”. This Mary is not Mary, Jesus mother nor is she Mary Magdalene. But she and Martha, along with their brother, Lazarus had a special personal with Jesus. And now, Lazarus is sick and dying. So they do what we have done, when a family member is dying, we send word to family and close friends to come and see before it is too late. And so Jesus goes.

Call and response, but he is too late. Lazarus is dead and buried. You know, the first funeral for one of the 17 students and staff killed in the most recent school shooting was Jewish. In the Jewish tradition, the dead are buried with 24-48 hours. The visitation takes place afterwards.

When Jesus arrives, the sisters greet him with the news. At the sight of Mary’s tears, Jesus himself does what we all probably have done when we hear about the death of a loved one, he wept.

Death is on our mind this week, as we heard the news yet another mass shooting in America, this one once again in a school, claiming the lives of 17 students and staff.

So we go to face death and weep at the news.