SERMON RECAP
OCTOBER 11, 2026

Series: Mission and Vision
Sermon: Grow together as we "Come and See"
Scripture: John 1:35-51

Jesus' first words in the Gospel of John are a question. When two of John the Baptist's disciples start following him, he turns and asks, "What are you looking for?" (John 1:38). They were looking for the Messiah, the Lamb of God. It's a question worth asking ourselves as a church. Here in Rock Island, in the midst of economic turmoil, political upheaval, and deep polarization, and in the midst of our own faith struggles, family struggles, grief over loved ones, and worries about health and the future: what are we looking for when we come into this place?

No one can answer that for you. But we can say what we're trying to create. In a sense, this congregation has been working on it for 190 years, and as Two Rivers for 18. More recently, through the Changemakers series, a congregational potluck, and many conversations about our values, we've been discerning who God is calling us to be. The result is a vision of a church planted by the streams of God's justice and compassion, and a mission built on Micah 6:8: to serve, to connect, and to walk together as we grow in faith.

Serve. We look outward, making our neighbors' lives a little better. We apply balm to the wounds and also work at the disease itself. That means our weekly community meal, where 70 to 90 people now gather, a number that keeps growing as more people are in need. It means our little free pantry, the collections our kids and youth assemble, and letters, advocacy, and even protest when it's needed. We serve and do justice in our neighborhood, our community, and our world.

Connect. We connect across cultures, languages, and generations. Watching our children sing gives us a picture of what that connection looks like. We won't agree on everything, but we can learn from one another and share core values about how we should love one another. And we reach those who can't be here, through We Care packages, phone calls, and notes in times of need.

Walk. The third part of the mission is walking together to grow as disciples. In John 1, the refrain is "Come and see." Jesus doesn't explain what is happening; he invites people to come and see it. The very next story is the wedding at Cana, where Jesus makes sure the celebration continues.

Come and see, because you ain't seen nothing yet. Too many Christians live on "milk": a surface-level, purely personal faith that isn't willing to be challenged. Two Rivers aims to be a place where growth is possible because questions are honored. Here, simple answers aren't forced, and the preacher can say, "I don't know. What do you think?"

Here we can ask questions and wonder together. And we can do more than come and see. We can come and dream about what could be.

"Come and See" by Lauren Wright Pittman. SanctifiedArt.org



Where heaven and earth touch.

The passage ends with a strange promise to Nathanael: "You will see heaven open and God's angels going up to heaven and down to earth on the Human One." (John 1:51)

It's a callback to Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28), the story behind the old song "We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder." Jacob, whose name means "heel" or "one who supplants," was a trickster. Think Thor and Loki: one twin strong and favored, the other always scheming. Facing the dark night of his soul and the ways he had been a heel, Jacob dreamed of angels going up and down a ladder: a thin place where heaven met earth. Later he wrestled with God through the night and came away with a limp and a new name, Israel, "one who wrestles with God."

John's story echoes this. Jesus gives Simon a new name, then calls Nathanael "an Israelite without deceit," unlike Jacob, who was full of it. Nathanael will see what Jacob saw: heaven and earth coming together. But not on a ladder. On Jesus. That is the invitation.

Come and see what it looks like when heaven and earth touch and God's kingdom is made real here: at the table, in song, in prayer, in healing. Come and see the joy of curiosity, the joy of connection, and the wonder of serving one another. What is happening now is just the beginning. So lean into the mission, the connection, and the growth. Come and see and be a part of church panted by the everflowing streams of God's justice and God's compassion.

NEXT WEEK: **New Series: Becoming, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**