

10am HC Sunday 18 January 2026

Isaiah 49:1-9, 1 Cor 1:1-9, John 1:29-42 – “Come and you will see”: knowing Jesus as our saviour comes with following and spending time with Jesus

There's a widespread perception that dating apps have taken over from the traditional ways that people used to meet their romantic partners. But it turns out it isn't true. More than one survey shows that, contrary to what the dating apps would have you believe, only about 10% of people met their partners through a dating app.

A survey last year showed that 53% of British people surveyed had met their partners in person –at school, or university, or work or social events.

And 57% - almost three in five - aged between 18 and 25 said that they met their partners first as friends and then progressed into a romantic relationship.

Perhaps those figures are confirming what we know instinctively to be true: that the best way of getting to know somebody is by spending time with them. That is how you can discover who they really are: not just their personalities, but their priorities and their values.

Very rarely can we look at people and see at once who they really are.

Our gospel reading today shows us how people came to know who Jesus was. And we see that their understanding of Jesus was not just a matter of having an insight into who this was, but also came through an invitation, from Jesus, to spend time with Jesus, getting to know him better.

Although John the Baptist says (twice) ***I myself did not know him***, we see in his testimony about Jesus the insight that comes from knowledge, and from experience, when John the Baptist declares Jesus is ***the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world***.

Hearing Jesus called the Lamb of God brings to mind the lambs of the first Passover, when the Lord *passed over* each of the Israelite homes, doorposts smeared with blood from a lamb, on the night of their escape from Egypt.

John the Baptist could not have imagined Jesus taking away the sin of the world through his death on the cross, but perhaps saw him as the conquering lamb, in Jewish tradition and the book of Revelation, coming in judgement to deal with the sin of the world.

John the Baptist testifies about Jesus that ***this is the Son of God***, with the insight that comes from his experience of seeing the dove descending, and hearing the voice of God, at Jesus' baptism, when he ***saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.***

Lamb of God, Son of God...

People are using these descriptions, but they do not yet fully know who Jesus is.

Even much later on, after Jesus has asked the disciples ***who do you say that I am?*** and Peter confidently says ***You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God*** Peter will still reject Jesus' claim that he must suffer and be killed.

Really getting to know somebody begins with an invitation.

Jesus himself stirs the disciples into framing a question for him with his open-ended question ***What are you looking for?***

When we try to articulate for ourselves what we are missing; the answers to our questions, what it is that we are striving for; who it is we feel the absence of; who it is we long for... the answer is Jesus.

But when Jesus asks the disciples ***what are you looking for?*** they reply with a question of their own; one that doesn't answer Jesus' question (perhaps they are not quite ready yet to tell him what they are hoping for), but one that keeps the conversation open. They ask Jesus "***where are you staying?***"

On one level, "***Where are you staying?***" is a very practical inquiry.

It is the kind of easy-to-ask question that we'd answer by saying "oh, not far away, I'm this side of town" or "oh, I'll drop you a pin", or "I've got it in my contacts, let me share it with you".

But it is also a question that invites Jesus to share with them information about himself. To tell them who he's chosen to lodge with, perhaps shedding light on why he's come and what he's doing. And depending upon his answer, there's the possibility of engaging with Jesus; potentially hanging out with him; becoming one of his people.

Jesus' answer to their question is not simply an address, or the name of the person he's staying with.

His reply is not purely factual, it is relational, ***as he said to them “Come and see”***,

(In fact, in the Greek, the words translated here as ***come and see*** convey the sense of ***if you come (and I want you to come) and you will see....***).

These are words of encouragement and of promise.

Jesus takes the initiative and he issues an invitation to the disciples. And ***They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day.*** That day that they spent with Jesus, getting to know Jesus, would be the start of their journey with Jesus. Perhaps, when Jesus later invites them to follow him and he tells them ***do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people***, it is in part because of that day, with Jesus, that they do leave their livelihoods and follow him.

And Jesus' message to us is ***Come and you will see.***

Follow and you will find.

Because we can come to know Jesus. We can know Jesus by reading the Bible. Through prayer and worship. And by hanging out with his people: the people who share his priorities and his values and who want to follow him and to live their lives according to the will of God.

God wants us to come to know Jesus as a community. In the words of Paul to the church in Corinth, we are ***called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.***

We are ***called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord***

When Andrew **heard John speak and followed him, ... he first found his brother Simon and said to him “We have found the Messiah”, and he brought Simon to Jesus.**

Coming to know Jesus is something we can do together.

We don't know whether Simon understood the significance of the new name he is given by Jesus: Peter, meaning “the rock”. We don't know whether it is a reflection on how the character of Peter himself would change, or on his future role in the church. But that change of name signifies the potential Jesus sees in Peter, and his confidence in what Peter will become.

Learning about Jesus and about how we might change, as we discover and deepen our relationship with him, is something we can do together. So that's why we are framing what we do and learn and share here at St John's in 2026 within the idea of pilgrimage.

As part of our pilgrimage theme for St John's in 2026, we are looking at getting out of the day-to-day routine, and having a quiet day somewhere, together. We're thinking about possibly getting together to read, or re-read, or listen to, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

And we're thinking about how we might spend precious time with one another and with Jesus, perhaps by walking a pilgrimage route.

Through insight, responding to the invitation from Jesus to **Come and you will see** – these are the ways that we can expect to be changed in 2026 if we take up the challenge to become a pilgrim people.

Are you excited at the prospect of forging a deeper relationship with Christ? Are you ready to follow him, to find what you are looking for, and to discover a new life with Jesus?