

## **The Second Sunday after Epiphany**

January 22, 2017

Christ the Rock Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Farmington, NM

**John 1:43-51** The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." 49 Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

### **"When Jesus Finds You"**

Four weeks ago we celebrated Christmas. So where are those gifts that looked so enticing while they rested wrapped beneath the tree? One or two might be sitting on a shelf, still encased in the original packaging. Others that weren't quite what you wanted have been sent back and duplicates taken back to the store. Now you're just waiting for the refund to come so you can turn around and get the gift you actually want (or didn't already have).

That's pretty standard when it comes to gifts. Some gifts you spent time researching and tracking down by going store to store. You thought you found the perfect fit only to find out something wasn't quite right. What you thought they needed or would really appreciate didn't quite hit the mark. Whether you are giving or receiving, you almost never get to see the perfect gift.

That's what makes the events of John chapter one so special. When Jesus finds you there might be some hesitation. You might be skeptical at first. But we see the call to discipleship from Jesus is the perfect fit. And I think it all starts with the surprising thing about the call to discipleship. It starts with Jesus. Jesus is the one doing the finding. All the other blessings fall into place when Jesus finds you.

#### **1. Jesus Calls to Discipleship**

Most of the Sundays in this series we will be following the Gospel according to Mark. But John wrote this account of the good news of Jesus after the other three gospels were familiar to some of the earliest Christians. He supplements those accounts and fills in some gaps for us. So last week we witnessed Jesus' baptism in the pages of Scripture. We realize Jesus is beginning his work to stand in the place of sinners and serve sinners. We realize John the Baptist had been attracting crowds. But they weren't all just casual, curious onlookers. He had developed some legitimate disciples. Keeping with his life's purpose,

John is quick to transfer those followers over to Jesus. He does this in a not-so-subtle way. After baptizing Jesus, John spots him again, points him and tells his disciples: **“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”** (John 1:29) The next day he again says: **“Look, the Lamb of God!”** (John 1:36) This time two of his followers peel off and go over to Jesus. One of those disciples is Andrew. He immediately goes to find his brother Simon. When Andrew brings him to Jesus Simon learns what Andrew had found out about Jesus and gets the nickname Peter from Jesus.

What we have in John 1:43-51 is almost a repetition of that scene between Jesus, Andrew and Simon Peter. It begins: **“The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, ‘Follow me.’”** (John 1:43) This is pure Gospel. Jesus seeks and finds. Jesus goes out and searches for disciples and calls them. There is nothing especially noteworthy about Philip. We don’t hear much about his character or personality. No mention of his family or history. Yet Jesus went out looking for him and called him to a life of discipleship. Flashing forward through the rest of the New Testament record we find out Philip becomes part of this inner circle of 12 apostles. It’s all grace. Jesus finds. Jesus calls.

Do you ever have conversations with people and you know it’s never going to be a simple chat? You ask them casually how they’re doing and they launch into a lengthy recap of recent history. All you expected was a ‘fine’ or ‘pretty good.’ You check in to see what’s going on and you a complicated answer. Her brother lost his job. His aunt is in the hospital. Grandma broke her glasses and can’t drive and it’s taking too long to replace them. Son-in-law broke his arm. And the neighbor’s dog got hit by a car. Drama. Every time you talk to them, there’s lots of drama. Or maybe you’re the one who always has lots of drama going down in your life.

Notice the complete absence of drama when Jesus finds Philip? The truth is we all have our own drama. We have issues and baggage and history. And some of it is pretty complicated. And when Jesus finds us we think of Jesus helping or adding to all this drama. But that’s the amazing thing about discipleship. When Jesus finds us, he turns our drama into his drama. And his drama becomes our drama. You don’t stop being you with all your issues and concerns. It’s just that the life of Jesus becomes more important than your life. His concerns outrank your concerns. What happened in his life takes precedence over what’s going on in your life. The one who finds you claims your life for himself. You are his own. His call is a full-time, life-changing call to discipleship.

## **2. Jesus Extends the Call through You to Others**

That calling to discipleship had a profound and immediate impact on Philip. After Jesus found him, Philip went straight to find a friend: **“Philip found Nathanael and told him, ‘We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’”** (John 1:45) Philip found and called Nathanael. He explained why Nathanael should be a follower of Jesus as well. This is the second amazing part of what happens when Jesus finds you. Jesus find and calls disciples in his grace. Then disciples turn and find others, calling them to discipleship as well.

Philip sets a great example for all disciples of Jesus. We all have a Nathanael in our lives. We all have people in our lives who don't yet believe in Jesus. We don't know how much we should read into Nathanael's reaction: "**Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?**" (John 1:46) Maybe he was just surprised. Maybe he was being dismissive. That kind of matches the people we have in our lives. We can think of them as being somewhere on the cynicism spectrum.

Let's take a look at some of those folks on that spectrum. You know people who have a basic hope. It is a general, unfocused hope. A lot of these people you know are good and decent people. They are optimistic things will improve. But is a hope without Jesus. Then there are people who have a sense of pride in human progress and achievement. They don't have anything against Jesus. They just don't see a special need for Jesus. Their brand of cynicism usually involves some kind of hope in their own self-realization, self-actualization or self-fulfillment. Then there are people who have an extreme pessimism that won't even consider Jesus. Despair grips them because of how corrupt our world has gotten. Sometimes this despair lead them to shameless, unconventional behavior.

So now is a good time to give yourself a score on how you have handled those cynics in your life. What is your track record as part of your call to discipleship? When I look at my life, I see a lot more Nathanael than Philip. The truth is, you and I might be disciples of Jesus, but we all still struggle with our own skepticism and cynicism, our doubts and fears. And that's a crucial step in the call to discipleship. When Jesus finds us, he calls us to come to grips with the call to total commitment and confront our own doubts and cynicism.

Philip provides great encouragement for you and me as discipleship of Jesus. When he finds resistance calling Nathanael to discipleship, when he hears those objections, he simply responds: "**Come and see.**" (John 1:46) That's a great approach for how we handle unbelievers on that spectrum, from all the people genuinely interested in the Christian faith and those openly hostile to Jesus. But those words are for us too. Comes and see Jesus for all the holes in your faith. Come and see Jesus for that inner cynic in your heart as well.

### **3. Jesus Brings You to Glory**

There is a joy in Philip we get from these verses. There is nothing specifically that tells us he was overflowing with joy or he cried out for joy. But that's the only explanation for receiving Jesus' invitation to follow and then turning to invite Nathanael. Philip's joy is contagious. Too often we see lots of things besides joy in our discipleship. But the joy in Philip's life didn't come from himself. Philip found joy in who Jesus is and what Jesus does. And when we feel overwhelmed by the burden of the call to discipleship, we need to find joy in Jesus. Joy comes from the freedom of discipleship that leaves results to Jesus.

Your discipleship can take another important cue from Philip. Better than a script we can memorize and regurgitate, Philip gives us an approach. We understand it is important to deepen our knowledge of Scripture and have a good defense of the faith. We want to understand common objections to the Christian faith and solid Christian answers. But the challenge from Philip gives us an even more important approach: "**come and see.**" (John

1:46) That gives our friends all along that spectrum of cynicism and unbelief a chance to experience Jesus for themselves. Invite them to see Jesus.

Rather than demanding that someone first turn their lives to Jesus or surrender every objection before advancing, we give Jesus the chance to do his work himself. That's how Nathanael came to acknowledge Jesus as **"the Son of God...the King of Israel."** (John 1:49) The Son of God came to give a different kind of hope than the generic optimism of some decent skeptics. God himself comes not to excuse unconventional behavior or people the power to reach the full potential of human progress. God comes to rescue his people as the Lamb. The Son of God came into this world as the **"Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."** (John 1:29) The King of Israel didn't come with armies or loud commands. He came with royal power to and humility to accomplish the rescue of his people. He humbled himself to serve to those stuck in the pride of doubt and unbelief. The King came to show mercy by giving up his life for those reluctant disciples. He came to bring forgiveness to all who fail in their commitment as disciples. We don't know if Nathanael realized it at this point or not. But the defining moment for Jesus to reveal himself as the true King of Israel was when he was paraded before the crowds on his way to crucifixion. When the notice hung over his cross in mockery, Jesus became the King for all, cynics and disciples alike.

Your God and your King gives you a different perspective on those unbelievers on the spectrum of cynicism. Rather than revulsion, Jesus gives you sympathy for their plight. They aren't so different from you. You just know and believe who Jesus really is. And you have the promise of Jesus: **"You shall see greater things than that."** (John 1:50) Yes, Jesus fulfills and completes the promises of Moses and the prophets. Faith allows you to see Jesus as more than just a ruler to improve your life or one option for hope. You have the perspective of faith. Jesus showed himself to be Israel's king at his crucifixion. But that was his exaltation to glory too. His passion and suffering are the greater things you now see. His victory over sin and death are greater than any expectation of any cynic. His resurrection to life gives the promise of a greater life than any we could hope for outside of Jesus. When Jesus finds you, he calls you to the glory that only comes through the call of discipleship.

That makes Jesus the perfect fit. Jesus is exactly what you need even if he's more than what you want. He's the perfect gift whether you were looking for him or not. And now he gives your life of discipleship a definite goal. Here is your goal for your personal evangelism challenge: Let your life and your church be places where people can come and clearly see the Savior. And when Jesus find them, the blessings of faith fall into place. Amen.