

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

January 17th, 2021

Second Sunday After Epiphany – John 1:43-51

I'm going to share with you a message that I have given a title: **Come and See**

Please join me in prayer: Gracious God, we thank you that you continue to call us to see the great things that you do for us and through us. Open our ears, we pray, so that we may hear you whenever you call; open our eyes, oh Lord, so that we may see you in our lives. Even this morning as we meditate on your word, show yourself to us Lord, that we may be encouraged. Through Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Sermon:

There are times in life when doubt sometimes overtakes us and we're fed up with false hopes and unrealistic expectations, so much so that it's not easy for people to convince us that there are real possibilities of life taking a different direction. Such times often come when we've been disappointed, when nothing seems to be working for us, when all our efforts have been frustrated, when we've suffered for too long. It's easy to give up hope; it's easy to dismiss any possibilities and to throw in the towel.

Today's lesson from the gospel of John tells us this morning about a certain brother named Nathaniel. Nathaniel came from Cana in Galilee, according to John 21:2, where Jesus performed his first miracle at a wedding reception. Nathaniel and his friend Phillip had probably been studying scriptures and had discovered in scriptures that there was a promise about someone who would come and make things right and restore the fortunes of Israel. Nathaniel and Phillip had probably followed up on this promise and were looking for this Messiah.

But upon hearing that this possible Messiah came from Nazareth, Nathaniel was put off, and he dismissed Jesus because Nazareth was too ordinary a place to be home for a Messiah. He wondered, "can anything good come out of Nazareth?" For Nathaniel, Nazareth was too ordinary to be included in God's plan.

You see, this is the major problem when it comes to the things of God – there is so much simplicity, there is so much familiarity, so much normality, that it is easy to dismiss what God is

doing among us through ordinary experiences. It is easy to reason away what God is doing, because there are no clearly marked signs to tell that this is God, more so when God comes to us through a mere human being that we can see and analyse and judge and take for granted. For far too long, humanity has struggled to see or hear God; humanity has struggled to recognise God. Look at the young man Samuel in our first reading, how clueless he was when God called. Look at Nathaniel, how clueless he was about the Messiah from Nazareth. Look how clueless you and I are sometimes, when we try to use simplistic reasoning to dismiss God out of our lives. It's easy to miss God.

But thank God, because Nathaniel had a good friend, Phillip. Phillip did not easily give up on his friend, neither did he try and convince him to believe. He only made an invitation that would change Nathaniel's life for good. He said, "come and see." Come and see, so that you can judge for yourself; come and see, so that you can have firsthand experience; come and see, so that the man can speak for himself. Sisters and brothers, I believe that God's call is a call to an experience, an experience of who God is to us, and who we are before God. And that is not an experience that one can easily have only by being taught – it's an experience that one can have when one responds to the call of a relationship with God.

I just love how Jesus addresses Nathaniel's confusion and doubts. The Bible says when Jesus saw Nathaniel coming toward him, he exclaimed, "here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" What? A person you're seeing for the first time, saying such a personal statement about you? I'd have been equally shocked myself. And to demonstrate how much he knew Nathaniel, Jesus goes on to explain, "I saw you under a fig tree before Philip called you." Now some say that 'under the fig tree' was a common place where people usually went to study the scriptures or to meditate on the things of God. So, going with this understanding, Jesus is saying, 'Nathaniel, I know you; I know your thoughts, I know your desires and your dreams, I know what you're hoping for.' And in that moment, it became clear for Nathaniel who Jesus was to him. It was no longer about where Jesus came from, but it was about what Jesus had revealed to him. And all his doubts, all his confusion, everything that kept him awake at night was dealt with in that moment.

Let me conclude this message by saying, this is the blessing we have in answering the call of God, because it is a call that addresses our deep-seated fears; it is a call that addresses our

worries and concerns; it is a call that deals with our inadequacies and guilt; it is a call that gets to the depths of our being because it is a call that comes from the One who knows us. The psalmist says, “oh Lord you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.” God knows who we are, and when God’s call comes to us it addresses even the things that we are too afraid to address about ourselves. It is a call that changes everything about us. And all I can say to each of you sisters and brothers is, come and see; **Amen.**