

**COME AND SEE FOR YOURSELF****John 1:43-51**

**INTRO:** I grew up in the church. If the doors were open we were there. My dad was my pastor, my best friend was the deacon's son, my grandmother was my first Sunday School teacher and my older brother and a couple of my sisters also served a stint in that role. Church was who we were.

When I was 11 years old that same best friend, Allen, and I went to Kenbrook Camp, the Atlantic Conference Church Camp. After a week of some fun and a lot of homesickness, the last night of camp (Friday) rolled around, and there was a campfire. The opportunity was given to receive Jesus as our Savior and Allen I did just that. Because that's what church kids did.

And my life continued on. I was a good Christian kid, but my vision was clouded. It was clouded with me so that I couldn't see Jesus. Or should I say, I hadn't seen Jesus because I was in the way. My vision of Jesus was who he was for other people, namely my parents and other people I looked up to. I really needed to see him for myself. How I eventually experienced Jesus for my own, some 10 years after that Kenbrook Campfire experience, is too long a story for this morning, and not completely germane to this talk. The much-shortened version of it is that after a rather significant spiritual crisis, Jesus became very clear to me. I saw him for myself. He was no longer a reflection in someone else, instead he was a reality for me. I had finally seen him for myself.

Our Lenten series is Open the eyes of my heart Lord, and a key component of having our eyes opened is truly seeing Jesus for who he is. He is a must see. Others cannot come to know him merely by what we tell them – they need eventually to meet him for themselves and see him with their own eyes – that is see him with the eyes of their heart. Nathaniel is a picture of that. Listen to our scripture for this morning. **(Read John 1:43-51)**

This is another example, similar to last week's woman at the well, where we see how . . .

**Jesus seeks out his disciples**

- In other words, he goes looking for his followers; **US**.
- Jesus found Philip. We see it in verse 43, "*The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. FINDING PHILIP, he said to him, 'Follow me.'*" Last week we saw how Jesus took a forbidden route, rather than the more difficult and more circuitous route around Samaria proscribed by the Jewish religious establishment. He did this in order to set up an intentional meeting with a woman who was not only from a despised people, but despised by her own people. He had in mind to bring eternal life to her – so he went looking and found her. We need to be reminded of this, Jesus comes looking for us, and he WILL find us. After that it's up to us what we do with that. But I get ahead of myself. . .
- Notice Philip's response to Jesus. In the verses leading up to our text, Jesus has begun calling his disciples. Andrew and Peter and another person, who is possibly John, were followers of John the Baptist, but when they meet Jesus they follow after him without hesitation. Next, Jesus finds Philip and it is obvious that Philip also dropped everything to follow Jesus.
- There is nothing extraordinary about Philip. He was just a regular guy – and Jesus went looking for him, and finding him, said, "Follow me." When you really look at it though, that is exactly who Jesus calls. He looks for, and calls ordinary people, like Philip and like you and me.
- We can be like Philip. Just like him . . .

**We need to find others**

- And then tell them about Jesus. We need to tell them to come and see the One who truly SEES. The woman at the well would like to have been invisible because of the shame she lived in. And people probably tried not to look at her, and if they did it was with condemnation. But Jesus, in the words of the song, looked beyond her fault and saw her need. Likewise Jesus saw Philip and called him to follow him. Philip saw right away that he needed to go tell the good news, "Here is the promised deliverer we've been waiting for."
- The world is waiting for deliverance. They're aching for good news. We need to invite others to come and see Jesus – we know that they have already been seen by him – let's help them see him.
- And we need to realize we don't have any power to convert someone. We do, however, have every capability to introduce them to Christ. That is why the term "Soul winning" is inaccurate. It's actually soul introducing.

- But as you expect, you'll often get pushback. Philip told Nathaniel about Jesus and there was immediate resistance. After all, this Messiah had been promised for hundreds of years. "Why now? And from Nazareth? Give me a break!" But Philip didn't take "No!" for an answer. Like him we need to . . .

### **Persist through the objections**

- Philip would not be put off. His friend Nathaniel was too important to him to miss the opportunity of an eternal lifetime.
- "Get out from the shade of that fig tree. Don't just sit there and ask questions, come and see for yourself. Put aside your doubts and come and see for goodness sake!" The song I sang as a kid, "Red and yellow, black and white; they are precious in his sight rang true for Philip 2000 years before it was written – Nathaniel was too precious to lose.
- Jesus loves the little and big children of the world IS TRUE. And they should be precious to us too. Gently push aside the resistance and persist at bringing them to meet Jesus.
- We already pointed out that Philip was not extraordinary in the eyes of the world, but his own immediate response was faith and obedience, so he goes out and makes his own invitation. When he finds that Nathaniel was not so eager, he insists and Nathaniel relents. As a result he really saw Jesus for who he was and quickly found that . . .

### **Confession of who Jesus truly is, opens us to greater revelation**

- Remember how Jesus knew all about the Woman at the Well? He knew her life, her hurts, he knew her faults. He SAW her. We see that here with Nathaniel. Jesus saw him before he knew it.
- Jesus SEES us too. Like Nathaniel and the woman at the well, he knew us before we knew him. That can be disconcerting until we realize the joy that comes from knowing he knows and still loves us and wants us in his Kingdom.
- Jesus referred to Nathaniel as a true *Israelite in whom there is no deceit*. (v. 47b). He saw him while he was still under a fig tree. Under a fig tree was referred to by rabbis as the best place to study the scriptures. Nathaniel under a fig tree meant that he truly knew the scriptures well that Philip was referring to when he referred to *the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote*.
- When Nathaniel heard this he was clearly blown away. His doubts were gone. His resistance fell away and he acknowledged Jesus as *King of Israel and Son of God* and not just a good guy or a smart man or a worthy rabbi. He is King and God. That is huge from a good Israelite.
- The name "Israel" means "God contended" and it was the name God gave to Jacob after Jacob had wrestled with an angel and had not given up. (Genesis 32:24-28), High School wrestling just wrapped up last month. When you see photos on the sports page of a wrestling match, you cannot miss that those two athletes are the very picture of "up close and personal". They really get a close- up view of the opponent and that's why word picture in a Jewish mind for the name "Israel" is quite literally "The Man Seeing God". That is what Jesus is implying with his proclamation about Nathaniel that here is a man who really sees God. It was high praise.
- Nathaniel was indeed a good man, Jesus acknowledged that. He was as good as you get . . . without Christ. But then he believed Christ, and that sealed the deal. Once that happened, Nathaniel's eyes were really opened and he saw Jesus as he really was and he would never be the same. It's what happened to me in February of 1979 – I finally saw Jesus for who he really is, and I've never been the same since.
- That's the way it is. The world looks different. There's hope. There's joy. There's reason to live and no fear in death. You also see who needs Jesus. It's like when you buy a new silver car. You thought you had unique taste but then as you are driving that silver car you begin to see other silver cars of the same make, model, and year. That phenomenon has a name. It's called Observational Awareness or the presence of something you never noticed before you were exposed to it.
- This observational awareness can prick our spirit too. When I was in Kenya I stayed with a family that had no electric or running water. When it got dark, it got really dark. I came home and never took our electric for granted. That Christmas after I got home, I remember feeling a bit guilty about putting up Christmas lights when my friend Ilam and his family lit their home with kerosene. I will never be the same after Kenya – it is observational awareness.

- That's why, once you have REALLY experienced Jesus it will not let you go. Even if you resist it, it will not let you go. It's the same for the people to whom you've said "Come and see for yourself!" and they've resisted. They're not done with God yet. They now know too much. So don't be discouraged if you've been rebuffed. It's out of your hands and in the hands of the only one who can truly save souls. The song says "Oh love that will not let me go" and he won't. Just keep reminding them COME AND SEE FOR YOURSELF. Amen.