

Grace, mercy and peace are yours in abundance through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.” ⁴⁴ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. ⁴⁵ 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.”

⁴⁶ “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip.

⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.” ⁴⁸ “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” ⁴⁹ Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”

⁵⁰ Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.” ⁵¹ He then added, “I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Disciples of Christ,

We are in the church season of Epiphany. You have probably heard that word every year as the name of the season that comes after Christmas but what does it mean? What is the focus of the season of Epiphany? Epiphany means “to make known.” During this time of the church year we focus in on how Jesus has made himself known as the light of salvation for all people – Jew and Gentile alike. This morning, as we consider this portion of scripture, we will see how Jesus made himself known as **“He gathers his disciples (which includes us).”** We want to take a look at, **“His Invitation to Philip,”** and **“Philip’s Invitation to Nathaniel,”** and then consider, **“His call to us.”**

I. Even before we get to Philip we have to note that Andrew was the first disciple to start following Jesus. Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus. (John 1:35-40) They were both from Bethsaida – the same town where Philip lived. It wasn’t a large town and many of the people were fishermen. I’m sure that Andrew and Simon were talking about Jesus, this man who had called them to follow him, and the word was getting out.

John tells us that Jesus was about to leave and go into the region of Galilee but first he found Philip and said to him, **“Come follow me.”** This wasn’t just an invitation to follow him for a few hours or a day or to a specific location. This was an invitation for Philip to make a major change in his life and follow Jesus as one of his disciples. It’s interesting to note that even though Philip probably had heard about Jesus, it was Jesus who had to seek him out. Many people think they have to find God, but it is really God who seeks us out, even today. That is the way God works and we have plenty of examples throughout scripture.

In our first lesson we have the example of God calling Samuel. In the book of Genesis we have the example of Abraham, whom God called to leave all that he had and go to a place God would show him. The New Testament tells us about God calling the Apostle Paul as he traveled

on the road to Damascus. Those are just a few examples of the many scattered through out scripture showing how it is God who does the calling.

His invitation is very simple, **“Come follow me.”** because **“He that believes and is baptized will be saved.”** and **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”** Our second lesson this morning pointed out that God who chooses us and calls us by the gospel so that we might share in his glory. The glory of Jesus who defeated sin, death, and the devil by paying for our sins on the cross and rising in victory on Easter morning to assure us he is our Savior and had done everything necessary for our salvation. That is the gospel – everything that tells us about our Savior and what he has done for us. Everything that points to the salvation which God gives to us as a free gift, **“For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is a gift from God not from works.”** Sometimes people hear the gospel and think it is too easy – it’s too simple.

People are attracted to the things that require an effort on their part and that are glamorous and attractive. That’s why there are so many distractions of the world that tend to lead us astray. The reality is that the simple gospel message is a thing of beauty that displays the love and greatness of our God who wants us to have this gift.

When I ask people what they want in worship, all too often people are looking for a fancy power point presentation or more choir singing or better music or more charismatic preaching. Very rarely do I get the answer – keep telling me about my Savior or keep bringing me the comforting words of the gospel. People tend to concentrate on the presentation rather than the message.

Paul in his letter to the Corinthians said, **“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power”**(1 Corinthians 2:4-5). Don’t throw God’s invitation aside because something else looks better. There is nothing better than to be a disciple/follower of Christ. To hear about Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Who has paid for all of my sins. God’s love in paying for my sins and calling me to faith makes me want to hear God’s Word and to follow it. That’s why Philip had to share the news of the Savior with Nathanael.

II. “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.”” It’s obvious that Philip and Nathanael knew their Old Testament scriptures and God’s promise of a Messiah – a Savior. Philip tells Nathanael that “we” have found the one spoken about in scriptures. That “we” probably refers to Philip, Andrew, Peter, and John. And then Philip identifies Jesus as to his town and father’s name.

Nathanael’s reaction was not what Philip expected. **“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?”** Nazareth was not mentioned in the Old Testament prophecies. The Savior was to come from Bethlehem – from the line of David. How could the Messiah come from a little unknown town like Nazareth? It wasn’t destined for anything great like the birthplace of the Promised Messiah.

Philip could have argued all day with Nathanael but he spoke the three words that Nathanael couldn't argue with – **“Come and See.”** So they went and as Nathanael got closer, Jesus spoke words that got Nathanael's attention. **“Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.”** Jesus called him a “true Israelite.” Not just a physical descendant of Israel but someone who knew and believed God's promise to send a Savior. When Nathanael questioned how Jesus might know this, Jesus replied, **“I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”** Fig trees had very low hanging branches and you couldn't see under them until you were very close to the tree. Jesus had not been anywhere near the fig tree where Nathanael was sitting and so this declaration to Nathanael pointed to the omniscience of Jesus.

Nathanael didn't miss the significance of this. **“Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”** He addresses Jesus formally as Rabbi. He knew that Jesus had much to teach him and he also recognized Jesus' divinity by calling him the Son of God and pointed out that the Messiah would be the King of Israel – ruling over the spiritual kingdom of Israel which encompasses much more than just that small section of land in the Middle East.

Imagine how thrilled Nathanael and Philip must have been when Jesus said, **“You shall see greater things than that.”** They had no idea that Jesus was talking about the miracles they would witness, the demons they would see him cast out, or the great number of people he would heal – all things pointing to his divinity. They had no idea that they would be recipients of the first Lord's Supper, they would see Jesus captured and crucified, but even greater than that they would see Jesus after he had been raised to life on the very first Easter. They would see many great things as they followed their Lord and Savior.

III. Jesus not only said they would witness great things but also pointed out that he is our connection with heaven. Jesus said, **“I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”** We can only see heaven open through the eyes of faith and God calls us to faith through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. What a simple message and yet a powerful message – one that has to be shared because this is a message that brings life.

Believe it or not each one of us is just as well equipped as Philip to invite others to “come and see.” Jesus Christ – the Light of the World – God's light shines in our hearts. We have plenty to share because with the power of God's Word our hearts of stone have been changed into hearts of flesh. We know Jesus has paid for our sins, we know Jesus is always with us and guiding us through his Word.

So, in this world of fear we need not be frightened. In this world of worry we are at peace. In this world of doom and gloom and despair we have hope. That is what comes to us through God's Word and People notice. So, when people ask us about our hope don't be afraid to say, come and see.

For You are one of Jesus' disciples. That's a natural result of being called to faith and you have the Good News of Salvation – a message that has to be shared. Andrew could not help himself but immediately found his brother Peter. It was the same with Philip who found Nathanael. They couldn't contain their excitement. Each day we need to remind ourselves of the

excitement of being a believer. It's all in the message – the simple gospel message. There are still many people who would love to know as much about eternity as we do. God has won the victory over sin, the devil, and death – for us! May God give us the opportunity and the enthusiasm to share this good news so others may come and see this treasure of salvation. Amen.