

Sermon for January 14, 2024 – 2nd Sunday after Epiphany

John 1:43-51 (EHV)

Theme: We have found the One!

- 1) Jesus graciously called us to faith through His Word
- 2) Jesus graciously calls others through our confession of His Word.

⁴³ *The next day, Jesus wanted to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.”*
⁴⁴ *Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter.* 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 *Nathanael said to him, “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?”* *“Come and see!” Philip told him.* ⁴⁷ *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, “Truly, here is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”*
⁴⁸ *Nathanael asked him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered, “Before Philip called you, while 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 replied, “You believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that!”* ⁵¹ *Then he added, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”*

Christians are strange to the world. How so? We rejoice over a Man we never met, who walked this earth some 2000 years ago, and worship Him as our Saviour and God. Stranger still, we spend a lot of time, money, and effort to tell others about him. Why should anyone believe us? I mean, when you think it through rationally, our faith does not seem to make much human sense.

This invites another question: why do we follow Jesus in faith? We believe only because Jesus has graciously called us to follow him through the Gospel, which we accept as true. And why do we accept the Gospel as true? Not because it appeals to human logic.ⁱ We accept it because in it we recognize the voice of our Creator and Saviour calling us to himself through the Bible.ⁱⁱ The Holy Spirit speaks to us through His Word – moving our hearts to repentance and trust.ⁱⁱⁱ Our faith in Christ is entirely God’s gracious work in us.^{iv}

That is a crucial point to remember when confessing Christ to others. We cannot convince people to believe in Jesus through logic or reason. But we can invite them to meet Jesus in the Gospel – confident that the Holy Spirit will work in their hearts just as he worked in ours.

Whether they admit it or not, everyone is searching for purpose, meaning, and hope. Their consciences testify that something is off.^v Yes, whether they acknowledge it or not, all people are looking for a Saviour. Oh, how happy we Christians are to have found Him, or, more precisely, to have been graciously found by Him!

With the account of Jesus calling Phillip and Nathanael as our guide, let us consider how we came to believe in Jesus and how best to share him with others under the theme: **We have found**

the one! 1) Jesus graciously called us to faith through His Word. 2) Jesus graciously calls others through our confession of His Word.

Part One: Jesus graciously called us to faith through His Word

Our sermon text took place shortly after Jesus' Baptism and subsequent 40-day temptation in the wilderness by the Devil. Having returned from the Judean wilderness, Jesus returned to the Jordan River. When John the Baptist saw him, he told two of his disciples (Andrew and John) that Jesus was the promised Lamb of God. These disciples immediately followed him. Not only that, but Andrew found and told his brother, Simon Peter, that they found the Messiah. All three of them became Jesus' disciples.

⁴³ *The next day, Jesus wanted to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."*

⁴⁴ *Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter.*

Bethsaida was a small fishing village of no importance. It would not be where college recruiters would find the best and the brightest. And yet Jesus graciously called disciples who called this small-town home to follow him. Why? Not because they were wise and learned but simply for his mercy's sake.^{vi}

And look at how Philipp's call to discipleship came about: Jesus spoke, "Follow me," and Philip's heart became so overwhelmed that he had to follow him. "But why?" we might ask, "What convincing proof did Jesus give Philip that he immediately followed him?" None. Jesus did not have to prove himself to Philip. Why not? Because Jesus is God, and whenever God speaks, stuff happens. For example, when God said at creation: "Let there be light," there was light. When Jesus told Lazarus to come out of the tomb where he lay dead, he came out.

God's Word is powerful - accomplishing everything He desires. So, is it any wonder that when Jesus, who is both true God and true man, told Philip, "Follow me," Philip felt compelled to follow? He heard the voice of His Creator and Saviour! And just as sheep naturally follow their loving shepherd's voice, Philip listened to the voice of His divine Shepherd.^{vii}

And is it any different with us? Why do you believe in Jesus? Is it because the Gospel appeals to higher human reason and learning? This cannot be the case because Jesus says His message is hidden from this world's "wise and learned."^{viii} Do you follow him because you chose to do so him after weighing all the pros and cons in your heart? That can't be the case either because Jesus says: *You did not choose me, but I chose you.*^{ix} No, you follow Jesus only because He graciously called you through His Gospel – sending His Spirit to allow you to recognize His voice.^x

Yes, regardless of who the messenger is, Jesus is always the one speaking to us through His Word – sending the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, comfort us with forgiveness, and create faith in our hearts through His Word. And if that is how we were called to faith, that is how everyone is called to faith. This is essential for us to remember as we confess his Gospel to others.

Part Two: Jesus graciously calls others through our confession of His Word.

What was Philip's reaction when he realized that the promised Christ was calling him to be his disciple? He immediately told a friend. We read: 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."*

Notice that Philip's saving faith did not come about by a one-time encounter with Jesus. He called Jesus "*the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote.*" In other words, the Holy Spirit used the Old Testament Scriptures to convince Phillip that he needed a Saviour from sin and to be on the lookout for him. Now that he found the Saviour, he couldn't help but tell his friends.

Do you remember a time when the meaning of the Gospel penetrated your heart to such a degree that you could not help but smile and tell others about the joy you felt? I still remember those exceptional occurrences in my life when (for some reason or another) the Gospel filled me with such love, peace, and joy that I could not help but tell others about it – regardless of what people thought of me.

But where is that enthusiasm now? Unfortunately, we often allow the skepticism and cynicism of the world to affect our joy. The fear of "not knowing all the answers" and "how others might perceive us" throws cold water on our fiery zeal to confess Christ. Oh, how sad we have become. Let us, therefore, pray with King David: "*Restore to me the joy of your salvation.*"^{xi} Yes, may the LORD restore to us the joy in his salvation that Philip had. And, as we go back to Jesus in the Gospel – confessing our sins and meditating on all he did to save us – the Holy Spirit rekindles our Philip-like joy over Jesus, so much so that we cannot help but invite our loved ones to meet Him.

But Nathanael was suspicious of his friend's exuberant tidings: "*Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?*" Truth be told, Nathanael had good reasons to be skeptical. False "messiahs" were active during that time, trying to incite rebellion against Rome.^{xiii} These fakes got many of their followers killed. Who was to say that Philip was not misled by one of these antichrists? And then there was the whole "Nazareth" thing: the Scriptures were clear that the Messiah was supposed to come from Bethlehem. If Jesus were from Nazareth, how could he be the Messiah?

Philip did not know how to answer Nathanael's skepticism, but he believed Jesus could. Therefore, Philip replied, "*Come and see!*"

I want to pause here and discuss our confession of Christ. Sometimes, we feel disillusioned when our unbelieving friends and family look at us strangely when we tell them about Jesus. We become discouraged when they do not accept our repeated invitations to come to worship or Bible Class. But the reality is that we should expect these reactions. I mean, think about it: who of us would accept an invitation to worship a god about whom we know nothing? Our non-Christian family and friends are naturally skeptical about our message. It does not make sense to them. Only Jesus himself can convince them that He is their Saviour. And how does He do this? Through his Gospel.

Whether read in the Bible or spoken through his followers' lips, God's Word is powerful – accomplishing everything He desires.^{xiii}

Therefore, like Philip, we tell our family and friends: “Come and see Jesus for yourself.” And where do we take them to meet Jesus? We take them to God's Word. We show them Jesus in the Bible, letting Christ work in their hearts through His Word.

⁴⁷ *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, “Truly, here is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”* Even though Nathanael did not know Jesus, Jesus knew him. He saw the longing in Nathaniel's heart for the redemption of his people – for this was the hope of every true Israelite.

⁴⁸ *Nathanael asked him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered, “Before Philip called you, while 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!”* Jesus showed Nathanael that He knew him intimately, and that was enough! Yes, Jesus was the Saviour he had been praying for his entire life. Nathanael was convinced! What convinced him? Jesus himself!

⁵⁰ *Jesus replied, “You believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that!”* ⁵¹ *Then he added, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”* We could summarize Jesus' words with the phrase: “You ain't seen nothing yet.” Our faith in Jesus is not futile. He is the promised Messiah, who suffered and died for our sins on the cross and rose again in fulfillment of Scripture. These are historical facts. Jesus is the Son of God. The Gospel itself convinces us of this truth. And so, as sheep follow their shepherd, we follow Jesus – trusting that we will share in His glory at the end of time, just as He promised.

The world considers us Christians strange. Unbelievers view our faith as odd and meet our confession with skepticism. Nevertheless, we remain joyfully convinced that Jesus is our Saviour. Who convinces us? Jesus does, through the Gospel. Let us, therefore, share the Gospel with our family and friends. Do not worry about how to convince them to believe in Jesus. You do not have the power or the ability to do that. But Christ does. Just invite them to come and see Jesus in the Bible. Show them from Scripture that Jesus is your Saviour. It is as easy as reciting John 3:16 to them and explaining what that verse means for you. Then know that, as you confess Christ through the Gospel, it is not you they will be hearing, but Jesus himself. Amen.

ⁱ Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14

ⁱⁱ Cf. John 10:14-16.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Isaiah 55:11

^{iv} Cf. Ephesians 2:8-9

^v Cf. Romans 2:14-15

^{vi} Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

^{vii} Cf. John 10:27-28

^{viii} Cf. Matthew 11:25

^{ix} John 15:16 EHV

^x Cf. John 10:27-28

^{xi} Psalm 51:12 EHV

^{xii} cf. Acts 5:36-37

^{xiii} Cf. Isaiah 55:10