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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
January 14, 2018  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: 1 Samuel 3:1-109; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Hymns: 235:1-3; 770; 360; 412:1-2 (244:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 1:43-51

<sup>43</sup> The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." <sup>44</sup> Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup> 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." <sup>46</sup> And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

<sup>47</sup> Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" <sup>48</sup> Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." <sup>49</sup> Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

<sup>50</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." <sup>51</sup> And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Christ's glory is revealed.

During these Sundays following Epiphany we will be focused on the many ways that the glory of our Savior is revealed to the world. We will have readings concerning Jesus' miracles, and the authority evident in Jesus' teaching. Even today we will touch on the fact that Jesus' glory is revealed in the fulfillment of Old Testament scriptures. The common thread that connects the different components of our worship this morning is found in the call to faith. Perhaps we think of that being the Holy Spirit's purview more than that of Jesus, and surely we acknowledge the truth that all conversion is by the Spirit's power. However, as we look to the opening days of Jesus' ministry we are brought to the realization that even as Jesus calls His disciples, His glory is revealed in and through that calling. Today's text focuses on but two of the disciples, Philip and Nathanael, but it can be seen in the inspired record of the calling of the other disciples as well. From the calling of these two disciples we shall be instructed by the Spirit how it is that we also have been --

**THEME: Called to Testify to Jesus' Glory.**

The Spirit leads us to consider --

**I. Philip's Testimony to Nathanael.**

In order to do that we need to back up to Philip's call to discipleship. Our text tells us:

**John 1:43-44** The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."<sup>44</sup> Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

From the beginning we note the grace of God. Philip did not come looking for Jesus that he might be Jesus' disciple. Jesus found Philip. We are told that Jesus was about to begin the trek back to Galilee. He chose Philip, Philip did not choose Jesus. Jesus foreknew Philip. Jesus knew that Philip was also from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter whom Jesus had called to discipleship the previous day after the John the Baptist had repeatedly pointed

Jesus out to them. John told them that Jesus was “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29) also telling them that he, John, had seen the Spirit of God descend upon Jesus and abide with Him; (John 1:32) telling them that this Jesus was without doubt the Son of God.(John 1:34) The next day John the Baptist had repeated the gospel declaration, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36) giving Spirit provided direction for Andrew and Peter to leave John’s discipleship and follow after Jesus.

Considering the small size of the community of Bethsaida, and that they were all in close proximity to John the Baptist when Jesus was also present there, it is not only likely that Philip knew Simon and Andrew, but that Philip also had heard many of John’s gospel assertions concerning Jesus, but he had not gone after Jesus as Simon and Andrew had. Jesus came looking for Philip, for Jesus would have Philip to be one of that inner circle of His disciples.

The words of our Lord directed to Philip seem pretty simple for such a significant moment, indeed a life changing moment in Philip’s life. Jesus said to Philip, “*Follow Me!*” The force of these words is found in the Greek tense that communicates so much more than the simple English translation. The Greek tense clearly indicates that this wasn’t an invitation for Philip to come over to some location where Jesus might have a little talk with Philip, or to step closer to Jesus so He could show Philip something that couldn’t be seen where Philip was standing. No, the force of these words was that Philip was to set a new direction in his life that would be following Jesus wherever that might lead. There was power and there was purpose in that calling of our Lord, and the effect was immediate.

What we see is that Philip was called to testify to Jesus’ glory. That is a disciple’s calling! Philip’s action in responding to Jesus’ call was exactly what it was supposed to be.

**John 1:45-46** 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.”<sup>46</sup> And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

Something wondrous had happened in Philip's life, and his immediate desire was to share it, and so he sought out a close and dear friend named Nathanael, also known as Bartholomew. He sought Nathanael out, not to tell him that he, Philip, wasn't going to be accompanying Nathanael anymore on their personal and spiritual trek, but to share the good news of the gospel fulfillment with Nathanael. In Philip's words of testimony to Nathanael we see the foundation and the certainty of Philip's faith. He immediately and strongly referenced the Scriptures. He assured his friend that they had found the One that all the Scriptures talked about, the coming the Savior, and it was Jesus, the Son of Joseph, of Nazareth.

Nathanael's initial response was skepticism. Nazareth? That didn't make a lot of sense to Nathanael, who also knew his Scriptures. Something good come out of Nazareth? That was a bit of a stretch. Note Philip's response. He didn't enter into a debate and try to convince Nathanael with his own powers of persuasion. Philip was convinced by Jesus; Philip was confident that Nathanael would be convinced by Jesus. His simple reply is a model for us all: "Come and see!"

Take these lessons to heart, for all that is true here for Philip is true also for you. It starts with the grace of God in your life. You once were lost but now are found. Our Lord and Savior graciously sought us out, each of us. He called us with the gospel. He desired that we be His disciples, not in exactly the same way as Philip for we are not under apprenticeship to be called to apostleship. However, we are called to follow Jesus, and not for a moment of our day, but for the long haul. We are called to follow Jesus in all our ways. Wherever life may take us we are to take up our cross and we follow Him. He leads us in the paths of life. He leads us in the paths of righteousness.

It is true for us also that our faith in Jesus is not founded on superficial emotions. It is founded on the Word of God. We have the Word before us and we have come to know and believe that this Jesus, the son of Joseph of Nazareth, is the Christ who was foretold by Moses and the prophets throughout the Old Testament.

Having been called to follow Jesus WE also have been called with purpose: that we might be witnesses of His glory to others. This gospel really is something for us to be excited about. We have salvation in Jesus' name. We have full and free remission of sins. We have been empowered by the Lord and the working of the Holy Spirit within us to turn away from sin and live for righteousness. We are not conformed to this world. We have been transformed by the renewing of our minds. (Romans 12:2) We have, by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, become temples of the Holy Spirit, and acknowledge this truth in our manner of life because we are not our own, we were bought at a price, the precious blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Our lives are and shall be clear testimonies to those around us of the saving glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. WE want to share, no, we **need** to share that with all those we know and love!

And so Philip testified to Nathanael, and Nathanael went with him to see this Jesus for himself. What happened leads us to consider --

## **II. Nathanael's Confession.**

Again it was the Lord who made the first move.

**John 1:47-49** Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"<sup>48</sup> Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."<sup>49</sup> Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Jesus gave an immediate evaluation of Nathanael, and it was spiritual! Jesus knew Nathanael and characterized Nathanael as a true Israelite. He wasn't one that went through the motions, or didn't have an understanding of the spiritual nature of salvation and the promises of God. In this man Jesus saw there was no deceit. That evaluation was Nathanael's introduction to Jesus, and it was one that caused him pause, stopped him in his tracks, it was one that led him to challenge Jesus' knowledge of him. In response Jesus took Nathanael back to his morning meditations, his *private* meditation under the fig tree. Then Nathanael knew that Jesus truly knew his heart. No more needed to be said. The Spirit does

not share with us the content of Nathanael's meditation. That was between Nathanael and his God. Nathanael knew that it was his God that stood before him.

Consider the certainty of Nathanael's testimony. By calling Him Rabbi he acknowledged Jesus as a respected teacher, but then Nathanael went much deeper. He confessed with certainty that Jesus was the Son of God. He declared him to be the King of Israel. In doing this he was not mistakenly saying that Jesus was immediately taking over from the Romans. NO, He was acknowledging Jesus as the Son of David who was to come into the world, of whose kingdom there would be no end. Nathanael recognized Jesus' glory, and confessed that glory before all.

Jesus reply was in a manner of speaking sort of saying, "You ain't seen nothing yet!"

**John 1:50-51** Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." <sup>51</sup> And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

Yes, Nathanael would see far greater things in the months and years that lay ahead, and he finally would ultimately see Jesus as the ladder to heaven that connects us to God, and through which the Lord sends His angels to watch over us all. Yes, this is reminiscent of Jacob's dream of the ladder to heaven, and Jacob's conclusion was to be shared with Nathanael more and more unto that day when Nathanael himself would be with the Lord in heaven.

Again this is an important lesson for us. Jesus knows us as well as He knew Nathanael. Jesus foreknew us from eternity that He might call us to faith. Jesus knows us to be righteous and holy and without deceit or guile also, not because of our stellar character, but because of His grace, and the faith in His merits to which He has called us. We also have been drawn to that wondrous conclusion that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who came down to earth to bear our sin, to be our Savior. He is most certainly our way to heaven, our connection to the Father.

Now we know His glory. We know it by faith. We know from the certainty of the Holy Scriptures. We know it because Christ sought us out and found us, and called us to be His disciples. We are to follow Him, and we have been called to testify to others of “His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:145).

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.