

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Second Sunday after Epiphany - Year B

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

1 Samuel 3:1-10

Psalm 139: 1-6,13-18

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

John 1:43-51

01/14/2018

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. John:

43The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."

44Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45Philip found Nathanael and

said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote,

Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." 46Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of

Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward

him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" 48Nathanael asked

him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before

Philip called you." 49Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of

Israel!" 50Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree?

You will see greater things than these." 51And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see

heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

The Gospel of our Lord.

### Prayer

Let us pray,

Amen

### Discipleship

Good morning! Let's get this out of the way, because it's just a random point not really connected to the rest of this sermon, but it's always bothered me. I've consulted three different commentaries and they all say that Jesus has some supernatural knowledge of Nathaniel, and that's why Jesus knows who Nathaniel is... But when you read the text it sure seems like Jesus just happened to see the guy ahead of time. It will take me a little more digging to see what's going on here but it doesn't seem that supernatural to me!

Anyways, let's move on. Today we hear a lot of different names for Jesus. He's called Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth, Rabbi, Son of God, King of Israel, and Son of Man. So which one is he? Can he be everything to everyone? Our story in the gospel of John takes place at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Jesus is calling the first disciples, inviting them to "come and see" the ministry that's about to take place. Interestingly, the text today begins with a lie. Philip tells Nathaniel that "*We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth,*" which is ironic, because Philip didn't find anyone. Jesus called him.

And calling is something that plays a large part in today's Gospel. We ask ourselves what it means to follow Jesus in two different ways. One, what does it mean for our understanding of Jesus, and two, how does that shape our own response and action?

After the prologue in John we are shown a variety of people with a certain expectation of who Jesus is. They all assume that they can pin Jesus down. And yet, Jesus ends today's reading explaining that they will see far more than they could ever expect. Our God defies explanation. It made me think of all the people that I've looked up to in my life. Parents, teachers, professors, youth ministers, pastors, and counselors who have all shaped who I am as a person. They've shown me what being a Christian should look like. We've all had these people in our lives. Stop for a moment and think in your head of the people who have had the most profound impact in your own life.

For some, that impact isn't a positive one. Maybe you were shaped by what you told yourself you would NEVER become. Some people may have been shaped by histories of abuse or neglect, forming an iron will that was determined to be better than what they had experienced.

We are products of our environments. And so were the disciples. They all come to Jesus with a certain amount of expectation and understanding of who he will be. Words like Messiah and Rabbi were rich with a certain meaning. For some they expected Jesus to sweep out Rome with an army, a battle ready messiah who would restore the kingdom to its former glory. Others expected angels and power from on high. From the temple this messiah would rule from a throne given by God to guide all the nations.

We all have weird ideas of what Jesus and God should look like. For some, it's an old man, usually Caucasian, with a big beard sitting on a cloud. For others, it's a comforting mother,

protecting us from the harm we seem to endlessly afflict upon one another. These images for God have been shaped by whatever amount of knowledge about God that we have accumulated over the years.

And yet, our God transcends all of these expectations, the disciples', our own, all of them. If we're following along in the lectionary, we're at the beginning. Right now we have a chance to encounter Jesus with fresh eyes, to look upon the work of God and be transformed by it.

That's what is so interesting about the story. Jesus doesn't really stop and scold everyone who doesn't understand who he is. He doesn't give us hour-long lectures on messianic expectation and the true personhood of the second person of the Trinity. No, strangely, he invites the disciple to "come and see."

So I issue the same invitation to you for the coming year. Come and see... come and see what this Jesus guy is all about. Over that time we'll see how our definitions don't do justice to who Jesus really is. Over that time we'll see that some of our ideas were just plain old wrong. We'll cast those off and take on new ideas, and some of those might be wrong too! But that's ok! Because throughout all of it Jesus will be guiding us along, inviting us to witness the work of God in our lives and the lives of everyone around us.

It's amazing. When I look back at the ways God has continued to reveal Godself to me, I'm almost speechless. When I was younger I didn't even realize I was looking at God. In the love and kindness of my great-grandmother, hearing her hum hymns to me... to the stern dedication of my grandmother who took us to church every week. God was there. Later in life it was a youth minister who had incredible patience with the frustrating behavior I could

sometimes have. This past year I saw it in my family members as they cared for my dying grandmother.

God is weird like that, working to show us the love that God has through people that we so often take for granted. Other times God encounters us through other different and unique ways. And yet all of them are invitations for us to come and see more, to get a better glimpse of what God has in store for us. What are some of the ways that God has surprised you? Have you ever been shocked by what you have seen after God invited you to come and see? Some of us think that we've seen it all, that God couldn't possibly try something different, and yet... here we are, being surprised every time we walk in the door... God isn't done with us yet, and God isn't done with St. Paul's... don't believe me? Come and see... Amen.