

**Sermon Draft**

**Text: John 1:43–51**

**Sermon: “Come and See”**

*The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 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.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” (John 1:43–51)*

We use to eat at Citrus Grille a lot, Cindy, the owner was almost always there to greet us. When she died it was strange going there to eat, now they've closed. We were stunned. We had just seen her a few days before. She was always so friendly and always gave us a hug. She caught Covid, ended up in the hospital and never recovered. We often talked about church, and we invited her to come but she usually worked on Sunday morning.

No church was mentioned in her obituary. Her funeral was a meal at her house. But the Good News of Jesus offers so much more comfort and hope beyond sharing a meal when someone dies.

I thought of Cindy when I read our text. A man named Philip has met Jesus. Philip believes Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Savior for whom his people have waited for centuries.

Philip is so impressed that he shares the news with his friend Nathanael. ***“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’”*** (v 45). But Nathanael is skeptical. He has honest, serious questions about Jesus.

When Nathanael hears that Jesus comes from the podunk village of Nazareth, he responds, *“You’ve got to be kidding! Nazareth?” Philip said, “Come and see”* (v 46).

If you have a Nathanael in your life, someone who has honest, serious questions about Jesus, what do you say? Maybe you even feel like Nathanael sometimes yourself because you have questions. Or if you’re like me, sometimes you might hesitate to talk with someone who doesn’t seem interested in Jesus.

What will you say the next time you meet a Nathanael at a family reunion, as a friend on Facebook, or when you walk into a store? Here are three steps that might help:

First, we can look in. Looked inside ourselves. There are a variety of reasons we might hesitate to let other people know we’re Christians. We may be afraid of being embarrassed if the other person rejects our faith. We may worry we won’t be able to answer questions about our faith. Or we just may be lazy. We don’t want to be bothered with getting involved with someone spiritually searching.

When we hesitate for any of these reasons, We are forgetting that inviting someone to meet Jesus is not about us. It's about Jesus. We want to invite others to meet Jesus because of what he has done for us.

Two days before the story in our text, Jesus is called ***“the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”*** (John 1:29). I want people to meet Jesus because he accepts you and me when we're embarrassed about our faith, or we're afraid we don't know enough about what we believe, or we don't want to make the effort. I want people to meet Jesus because he went to the cross to pay for those times when I sinfully make life all about me. Then he rose with forgiveness and new life for me. That's why Jesus wants us to be like Philip was with Nathanael. Jesus wants us to invite people to meet him.

We call that witnessing. Witnessing begins with looking in, so the next step is to reach out. When we witness, we begin by building a relationship with another person whom Jesus loved enough to die for.

That relationship will include intentionally letting the other person know we are Christians and go to Peace Lutheran Church.

A Lutheran named Mike shared a story about going to a funeral visitation for his co-worker. These men had greeted each other almost every day for more than thirty years. They knew the names of the other's wife and children and other details about their lives. But it wasn't until the funeral visitation that Mike learned his co-worker belonged to another nearby Lutheran congregation.

Mike said, "I was amazed that not once in over thirty years did he tell me he was a Christian, nor a Lutheran." Mike didn't keep quiet about his faith. Mike had organized a daily morning Bible study in the locker room at work. At first, only two other men participated. But soon the group grew. Mike was reaching out.

Mike starting a Bible study is an example of the third action you and I can take. As we are reaching out, at some point we will need to show up. Simply show up! As we read in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter: "***Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.***" (1 Peter 3:15)

We show up to share our faith. We show up because what we say and do is our faith in action. We show up because faith in Jesus is spiritually a matter of life and death. In our text, Philip showed up: *“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.’ Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see’”* (vs 45–46). Philip wants to share that promise of new life with Nathanael. That’s also what we want for our Nathanaels.

We can invite the Nathanaels in our lives to “come and see,” as Philip did. We do what it takes to bring our Nathanaels to meet Jesus. Some people have met Jesus through an invitation to be part of a community service project. As they work alongside Christians, they want to know more about the Jesus these believers follow. Others have spiritual questions. They are open to coming along to a Bible class. As a pastor, I’ve served people I’ve just met who ask for a prayer in a hospital room or in the middle of Walmart or who request a funeral for a loved one, and as a result, they reconnect with Jesus.

But what if our Nathanaels turn us down? We don't give up. We make ourselves available, gently and respectfully. We don't pressure or push our friend. Jesus has promised he will give us the words to say when the opportunity comes. Our job is not to convince someone or argue them into faith. We are to plant the offer to meet Jesus by what we say and do as his followers. The Holy Spirit will do the rest.

And while all of this is going on, we take our own advice. We “come and see.” We keep coming to see Jesus and listen to him in his Word, the Bible. We keep coming to see Jesus as we praise him here with other Christians. We keep coming to see Jesus as we find his love working through us and other believers. We also need to have Jesus in our lives, so we continue to come and see. Jesus promises us, as he promised Nathanael, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man”* (v 51).

Since I've been a pastor, I've probably done 50 funerals or memorial services. I've been at bedsides as people took their final breath. We never know when someone we care about time is up or even someone we barely know. The story of Philip and Nathanael teaches us to be alert for opportunities to represent Jesus to everyone we meet.

Do you have a Nathanael in your life? You have a message to share too!

If you don't know a Nathanael right now, look around. The Holy Spirit may be sending one into your life. When that happens, look in to see what might be keeping you from witnessing and see how Jesus' love can remove roadblocks. Think about how you can reach out. Then, when the opportunity comes, show up.

You have a message to share. You can be like Philip. You can say about Jesus, "Come and see."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.