

WHAT GOOD COMES FROM IT?  
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JOHN 1:43-51  
JAN 18, 2015

<sup>43</sup> The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. 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> 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 there is no deceit!" <sup>48</sup> 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." <sup>49</sup> Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" <sup>50</sup> 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." <sup>51</sup> 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."

Several observances this weekend serve to remind us  
not to make negative assumptions about people.  
National Martin Luther King holiday is reminder  
not to prejudge what others deserve or can do  
because of their race or color.  
Life Sunday today is a reminder not to discount or devalue  
what one might do or the life they deserve  
because of their physical condition or disability.  
History is full of examples of great accomplishments by those  
who in infancy or childhood would have seemed  
so disadvantaged by situation or personal defects  
that they would never amount to anything.  
Today's text is a reminder not to assume low expectations  
of others but also of ourselves  
which actually expose low expectations of what God can do

PHILIP SHOWS WHAT COMES FROM JESUS' CALLING  
NATHANIEL DOUBTS GOOD COMING FROM LOWLINESS  
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It looks like Jesus just walks up to guy named Philip  
and out of the blue says "follow me."  
would you expect someone to just do that? Maybe not.  
But John hints that there is more going on behind the scenes  
than is apparent on the surface.  
In verses before this John the Baptist is pointing to Jesus.  
One of his disciples, Andrew, ends up following Jesus.  
Andrew tells brother, Simon, about him & he does too.  
Jesus seems to already know about Simon too.  
Right off he gives him new name, Peter, meaning rock.  
Text tells us Philip is from same town as Andrew & Peter  
Would you think they say nothing to him about Jesus?  
This is one of very few references in Bible to Philip.  
Another is when people come to him & want to meet Jesus.  
But first he goes off and finds Andrew,  
then together they take the others to Jesus.  
There is a pattern here. On one hand it looks like Philip  
is one of those people who is either so unsure of himself  
or so social that he can't do anything just by himself.  
Maybe you wouldn't expect one like this  
to become much of a leader, but Jesus does.  
Another side of this pattern shows that he is indeed a leader.  
From very beginning, he & Andrew lead others to Jesus.  
He tells Nathaniel: We have found Jesus.  
although actually it was Jesus who found him.  
So, when Jesus says, "Follow me," & he goes for Nathaniel  
He is following Jesus. He is following his example  
of going and finding and calling.  
Throughout this Epiphany season, we are reminded  
that this is part of being Jesus' disciples for us as well.  
Living faith leads us to want other to have this life too.  
There are some families that have not yet "had their Christmas"  
meaning they have not yet opened presents together  
to reveal what they got.  
The real gift of Christmas is Jesus but there are many  
who have still not had this gift revealed to them.  
We may hesitate to follow Jesus this way because we have  
low expectations of ourselves or what will happen.  
But as Jesus own words, "Follow me" cause it to happen,  
the gift of faith comes from Jesus himself.

we see this when...

### NATHANIEL DOUBTS GOOD COMING FROM LOWLINESS

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Nathaniel's initial sour reply might suggest he is a grouch.

Jesus puts it positively: In him there is no deceit.

He doesn't try to hide anything  
but just blurts out what he thinks.

But maybe, as with Philip, there is more to his story.

He is from Cana in Galilee, just over ridge from Nazareth.

Maybe it was perennial arch rival Cana looked down on,  
or maybe it really was a second rate place,  
or maybe he had left Cana himself because  
there wasn't much good in any of these little hick towns.  
Have you ever seen one of those super magnified pictures  
where you are try to guess what it is?

Sometimes when you are too close to something  
it is hard to see it clearly, in perspective.

Maybe that was Nathaniel's problem.

Or maybe Nathaniel had low expectations  
because he had been disappointed before.

Why would Philip seek Nathaniel to tell him about Jesus?

Maybe he knew he was interested in the Messiah.

Jesus describes Nathaniel as sitting under a fig tree.

Prophet Micah predicts when God saves his people,  
everyone will sit under his own fig tree.

"Sitting under a fig tree" became a Jewish expression  
that was slang for sitting and reading the Bible.

Nathaniel may have studied prophecies of the Messiah.

Maybe, under that fig tree he had once asked God  
to reveal the truth to him and to send the Messiah.

Being "from Cana" was another Jewish slang expression  
for being a Zealot fighting the Roman occupation.

because they thought that was how  
God's Messianic kingdom would finally come.

Nathaniel may have once been Zealot, fighting losing battle,  
but was disillusioned with that whole Messianic idea.  
Notice Philip's approach to his friend. He doesn't argue,  
or get defensive or offended by his rude reply  
but simply says, "Come and see"  
Come along with me and let Jesus himself show you.  
There are those today who may reject what God offers them  
because of low expectations.  
What good can come from someone born with disabilities?  
or in one who becomes severely injured or disabled?  
What good can come from an unintended pregnancy  
or one that may end up being disabled  
or a burden on one who cannot care for it?  
What good can come from enduring a terminal disease?  
What good can come from one whose mind  
seems to have gone before their body?  
When one is in the middle of a situation like this,  
It is possible to be so close to it that it is hard to see  
how to make any sense out of it.  
Or one can have such a low opinion of where one is coming  
from oneself and so not expect much from another.  
One can have had hopes and expectations and efforts  
disappointed and so be totally disillusioned with life.  
What can we say to someone like this?  
One thing we can say is "Come and see"  
It can make a big difference to see an ultrasound  
and see a real baby and not just a blob.  
See what the love & joy of those with mental disabilities.  
See the accomplishments of those with other handicaps.  
See the life that is still precious to those who suffer.  
Come and meet Jesus who knows and sees all, who says  
to Nathaniel, I saw & heard you before you realized it,  
when you were asking God to show you the truth  
when you were disappointed with your own efforts.  
Come meet Jesus who saw you and knew you & each one  
before we were born and had good plans for us.  
Jesus knew what difficulties and suffering we would have  
before it happened and knows how to help us.  
Jesus knows what we are like, including all our faults  
and still calls us to follow him  
because he knows how he will use us.

## JESUS SHOWS WHAT GOOD COMES FROM HEAVEN

<sup>49</sup> Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” <sup>50</sup> 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.” <sup>51</sup> 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.”

Philip sees Jesus as a man from Nazareth, the son of Joseph,  
yet does recognize him as the one written about  
in the law of Moses and in the prophets.  
the one who fulfills all God’s commandments we fail to keep  
and who keeps all God’s promises to help his people  
with healing and rescue from their enemies.  
Then, when Jesus reveals his amazing knowledge of Nathaniel,  
he realizes he is not just a man who can do that.  
He is the son of God himself, the ruler of God’s people  
who has come to us in person.  
He is the king of Israel who will free us from our enemies,  
not just human powers but the devil and death itself  
not by just by helping us fight back  
but by fighting and winning the victory for us.  
Jesus says we will see even more than that.  
Not only is he God who has come to be with us  
and to help us with all our struggles and suffering here  
but he opens up heaven for us.  
He is the portal to heaven that Jacob saw  
when he saw angels ascending & descending to him.  
He is the Son of Man Daniel saw  
who presided over the final judgment  
and welcomed people to eternal life.  
Philip and Nathaniel went on to see Jesus die on the cross  
and once again they were disappointed  
and wondered what good could come of that  
until Jesus rose again and showed that this suffering  
is itself the way he defeated sin, death and the devil.  
They went on to see Jesus ascending into heaven,  
welcomed by his holy angels.  
And again may have felt disappointed and alone  
until angels came to say he will come take us there too.

We now are invited to follow Jesus  
and also to bring others to come and see  
how he reveals his wisdom in his word.  
How he continues to bring good out of suffering in our lives.  
How he continues to give life and preserve life  
so that each one can be brought to faith and kept in faith  
until he opens up heaven and takes us there also,  
free from all difficulty, disability & suffering  
This is what he calls us to follow him to

#### PHILIP SHOWS WHAT COMES FROM JESUS' CALLING

His calling causes us to follow him in a way  
that includes going to invite others to come along  
even when it may seem no good may come of it.

#### NATHANIEL DOUBTS GOOD COMING FROM LOWLINESS

how a messiah can come from lowly Nazareth,  
and how good can come after discouragements.

Just as we are invited to see how God can bring good  
even out of troubles and suffering in our lives.

#### JESUS SHOWS WHAT GOOD COMES FROM HEAVEN

He has come down to fulfill everything where we fail,  
to forgive and take away our faults  
and by his suffering and death to open up heaven  
so that we have not just valuable life here  
but priceless life forever.