

Sunday 17th January 2021 – Bulwell United Reformed Church

This Sunday we move on to a story about the calling of the first disciples. Today, in John 1: 43-51 we hear about two friends who have an unexpected encounter with Jesus and initially react in very different ways. Together, Philip and Nathanael help each other to understand who Jesus is and they begin a journey that will redefine who they are. *A short service for personal communion focusing on confessing Jesus is Lord is included. Please have your bread & wine/juice ready.*

A gathering prayer

Almighty God, you speak to us in so many ways.
Help us, in our worship today, to hear your voice and know it is you.
Speak to us in the silence, through Scripture and by the Spirit.
Speak through others and through your creation,
through images, experiences, music and encounters.
Speak in ways that we can understand.
So, speak, Lord – and help us to listen.
Amen.

A prayer of confession

Generous God, loving and ever-forgiving,
we have not always said, 'Come and see', like Philip,
we have judged others quickly and wrongly, like Nathanael,
and we have followed you slowly and reluctantly.
**Forgive us, inspire us,
and fill us with generosity of heart and spirit.**
Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven...

Song Will you come and follow me

[\(326\) THE SUMMONS \(Will you come and follow Me\) - YouTube](#)

John 1: 43-51 - Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael

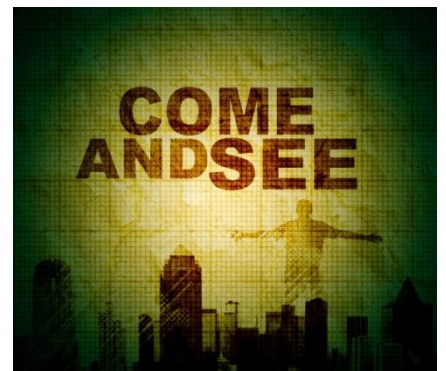
⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, 'Follow me.'

⁴⁴ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 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 'Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?' Nathanael asked.

'Come and see,' said Philip.

⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, 'Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.'



⁴⁸ 'How do you know me?' Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, 'I saw you while you were still under the fig-tree before Philip called you.'

⁴⁹ Then Nathanael declared, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.'

⁵⁰ Jesus said, 'You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig-tree. You will see greater things than that.' ⁵¹ He then added, 'Very truly I tell you, you will see "heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on" the Son of Man.' (NIVUK)

Come, see hear – John 1: 43-51

Nathaniel seems very much a straight down the line sort of person. A man of integrity. Called a spade a spade. So much so that he is the one from whom we get the saying "one in whom there is no guile." But Nathaniel thought he knew the lay of the land, and nothing but trouble could come from Nazareth. Nazareth had become linked with all things low and contemptible in his mind. The propaganda machine had done a job on Nazareth, and Nathaniel had unknowingly bought it. But then he met Jesus, and the light shone in on his prejudices and complicity in the scapegoating of Nazareth. Suddenly he felt naked. "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus has looked him in the eye and seen right through him. "You search me, Lord, and know me. You read my inmost thoughts. It overwhelms me!" He has seen his own darkness through the eyes of the victim of it, but he has seen mercy there too. Life-changing mercy. He has seen the victim offering generous forgiveness. And before he knows it he's on his knees acknowledging that this one from Nazareth is the Son of God.

Jesus clearly sees Nathanael as someone in whom God is already at work. The same might be said of Andrew and Philip, the disciples of Jesus. One of the signs of the kingdom will be, according to Zechariah 3.9, people sitting under their fig tree, in peace. Now Nathanael is convinced, 'You are the Son of God... the King of Israel'. No wonder John ends by referring to Jacob's dream at Bethel (Genesis 28). Bethel means 'House of God' and Nathanael can see that God dwells in Jesus. Jesus might have been living in Nazareth, but he is the point of contact between heaven and earth.

Overall then, this passage tells us to expect the unexpected. God's call can come from the most surprising people, in the most surprising locations, at the most surprising times. Today's servants of God must have confidence in who Jesus is and the activity of God in the world and be humbly sensitive enough to see that God may be working already in others, even where we would least expect it. It is our responsibility to help one another, within and outside the churches, to see the glory of God in Christ, and in the world. The gospels describe the call of many disciples, but the naming of these individuals, as of Simon and Andrew in the preceding verses, permits us to follow their progress from time to time. Our names allow us to be singled out and known, and to know that we are known, called and valued.

Revelation comes through the listening, response and the witness of all who respond to Christ's personal call. It is worked out in human lives, and seen in the small and seemingly insignificant choices that we make. God's call to us can take us by surprise – we may feel

powerless, unprepared, inadequate. But this reading tells us that God calls us all – choosing the apparently insignificant or unlikely and making something wonderful out of it. Jesus recognises something in Nathaniel and calls it out from him. This passage can challenge us to reflect on our faith community and to see people’s gifts and abilities in a new way and how can we help one another to live into the calling of God that comes to us afresh every day.

Prayer of Intercession

For all who seek, may their path be lit by the light of Christ.

For the homeless, for refugees and asylum seekers,
may they find shelter and places of safety.

For those who find themselves lost and confused,
may they find courage and the energy to change direction.

For those who have difficult decisions to make
may they be graced with clarity:

For those who are unwell in body, mind or spirit,
may they know your love through the warmth of others:

For those in all the governments of these lands,
for our neighbours and friends,
may they and we be servants of peace and the common good.

For healthcare workers and medical staff,
may they find strength when needed and blessing in the care they give.

For those whose journey on earth has reached its end
may they be filled with your welcoming light:

For ourselves,
may we resolve to follow more closely your way of light and peace.

In quietness of heart we make our individual prayers...

In all things, O God, may your Kingdom’s purpose of love and justice be served. **Amen.**



Song Be still

[\(326\) Be Still for the Presence of the Lord - David Evans - Lyrics - YouTube](#)

HOLY COMMUNION Thanksgiving Prayer – John 1: 43-51

We give you all thanks and praise, O God,
for what we know of you is overwhelming,
more wonderful than we can ever understand.

In these last days you have sent us your Son
— Jesus, son of Mary, from Nazareth.
In word and deed he brought the truth to light
and called us to follow
in the ways of integrity and discipleship.
When the enemies of life put him to death,
you raised him up by your power,
and likewise you raise us up
and unite us with Christ
that we too may be an honoured dwelling place
for your Holy Spirit.

***Therefore, with our hearts lifted high,
we offer you thanks and praise at all times
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.***



The Breaking of the Bread and Pouring of the Wine

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast.
I Corinthians 5:7

The Sharing of the Bread and the Wine

*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.
Blessed are those who are called to the wedding feast of the Lamb. Alleluia.*

Take, eat; this is the body of Christ, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of him.

This cup is the new covenant in the blood of Christ, shed for you and for all, for the forgiveness of sin. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of him.

Prayer after Communion

God of a love stronger than death, you have given us new birth into a living hope through the gift of your Son.

God with us, you have fed us with yourself and strengthened us for journeying ahead.

God of truth and power, you take our weakness and our sin and refashion us by grace.

A sending out prayer

Lord, what we have learned this day – help us remember.

Teach us to recognise your voice.

Teach us how to see you in our lives and encounters.

Help us to give others space so that they may hear you too.

Amen.



