

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Sexagesima Sunday, February 3, 2012**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 270, 277:1, 276, 279, 281.

Lessons: Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Acts 8:26-39, Matthew 4:12-25.

Sermon Text: John 1:35-42.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

We have been talking a great deal lately about John the Baptist. We find John again today at the beginning of our sermon text, again pointing to Jesus, the Lamb of God. John is the one who introduces two of his disciples to Jesus, men who then become disciples of Jesus. Jesus gives them the invitation to come and see.

Today we again point toward Jesus and extend an invitation:

**“LOOK, THE LAMB OF GOD ... COME AND SEE!”**

- 1. They followed Jesus and learned from him.**
- 2. He extends the invitation “Come, and you will see.”**
- 3. They realize they have found the Messiah, and reach out to others.**

Because of his preaching, John the Baptist obviously had gathered some followers, people who wanted to hear what he had to say. But we see again today that John was totally conscious of his mission. He was to be the forerunner, the man who prepared men’s hearts for Jesus the Savior.

Last week you heard John say *“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* The very next day he said again: *“Look, the Lamb of God!”* We must always point to Jesus as the Lamb of God, knowing that he is the innocent lamb who was sacrificed for sin, for our sins.

On this day Jesus is passing by. John points again to Jesus as the one who was to fulfill all the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. We read plainly *“When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.”* These two disciples are following the words, the instruction of their teacher. They are leaving their teacher, who has pointed them to someone greater than he, to Jesus, the Son of God, the Lamb of God.

*“Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, ‘What do you want?’”* Jesus, although he is the omniscient, all-knowing son of God, asks them what they want, what they are looking for. The evangelist tells us *“They said, ‘Rabbi’ (which means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’”*

This might seem like a strange question. But maybe they had lots of questions for Jesus, and this was a way of saying ‘let’s find a place to talk’, kind of like we might say ‘Let’s go have a cup of coffee’. Maybe they just didn’t know what to say. Maybe they didn’t know how to approach this great person, the Messiah, the Savior, who was the Lamb of God. This question suggests that they fully understood what John had talked about when he pointed to the Lamb of God.

At any rate they approached Jesus and opened a conversation. Notice how Jesus answered their question: *“Come,” he replied, “and you will see.”* Then we read: *“So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.”* They followed Jesus. They answered his invitation to come and see. And by spending the day with him they surely learned.

*“It was about the tenth hour.”* Most Bible scholars agree that we cannot determine exactly when the 10<sup>th</sup> hour was. If John was using Jewish time, it was 4:00 p.m. If it was Roman time it was 10:00 a.m. Since the evangelist John wrote this gospel for Gentiles and the disciples *“spent that day with him”* rather than that evening, it makes sense to assume that this would be 10:00 a.m. The exact time here may be less important than

the fact that John mentions the time. This detail suggests that John the evangelist, the writer of this gospel, was there, that he was one of the two disciples. Remember John never names himself in this gospel. So that would strengthen the opinion that John himself, in addition to Andrew, spent the entire day with Jesus.

I think many of us have wanted to spend time with someone great or learned and learn from them, and maybe have even spent time with someone, intent on learning whatever they could teach us. In our lives we could've spent time with a parent or grandparent, or wanted to spend time with a favorite teacher or mentor, learning what we could from that person.

But these two men, formerly disciples of John the Baptist, had now become disciples of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. A disciple is a follower. We learn more about one of these men. ***"Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus."***

Notice what Andrew bluntly tells his brother, perhaps in an excited voice. ***"We have found the Messiah"***. John explains for his Gentile readers: ***"(that is, the Christ)"***. There is no hesitance, no doubt in Andrew's mind. He is certain that ***"We have found the Messiah"***. Now remember that Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist. Andrew had no doubt received the baptism of John the Baptist, a baptism for repentance. We read in Matthew 3:6: ***"Confessing their sins, they [the people who heard John] were baptized by him in the Jordan River."*** Andrew no doubt was aware of his sin, and the need to be thoroughly cleansed from his sins. Andrew had no doubt come to believe that in the Messiah, the Lamb of God, he would receive full cleansing from all his sins.

And now he shares what he has learned and come to believe. Can you imagine the excitement that he must have felt in his life? He probably didn't just blandly and without emotion say 'oh by the way we have found the Messiah'. That would be hard to believe, because the Jews had been looking for and waiting for the Messiah for centuries. They had been awaiting the Savior, the long promised one who would rescue them. Andrew no doubt believed that this was the one, the Savior who was not coming to rescue them from the Romans, not an earthly Savior, but the one who would save Andrew himself, and the Jews, and ultimately all the world from all their sins, that is, from eternal death and damnation.

Andrew must have been rather insistent when he went to his brother, Simon. The evangelist tells us his full name, Simon Peter, as a clue to what is coming. Scripture tells us: ***"The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon."*** Andrew didn't waste any time. Scripture says ***"And he brought him to Jesus."*** What Andrew has discovered is important to him, and he believed it would be important to his brother too, just as it is important to every single person. Peter obviously went with him promptly.

How many of us, when someone comes to us for anything, don't try to put the person off, saying 'I'm too busy'. Whether it is our children or grandchildren – or anyone else – coming to ask or do something with us or wanting attention, how easy isn't it to say 'later', or 'I'm busy now', or even 'go away, don't bother me now'.

You have come to know Simon Peter as being rather forceful, perhaps impetuous, and quite outspoken. It's easy to imagine his brother insisting that he come to Jesus. Maybe there was also some curiosity about whether or not Andrew had really found the Messiah.

Notice what Jesus then does: ***"Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas' (which, when translated, is Peter)"***. We know enough about Simon Peter, however, to conclude that Jesus was not saying that Simon would earn his new name with his rocklike character. Too often this rock, Peter, would crumble, as when he denied the Lord Jesus at Jesus' trial. Nevertheless Peter was to become one of the 12 apostles and a foundation stone of the church. Peter through faith in Christ would, by the grace of God, be made rocklike in and through Christ the rock.

Our text goes on: ***"The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, 'Follow me.' Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida."*** Scripture says he found Philip. Of course this is the very son of God, and he knew what he was doing, and God fore-ordained everything that should happen to him. But notice how Jesus invites another person to follow him. Isn't that the way it always

is? Even though people may think that they find God, it is really truly God who finds them. We read in Romans 10:17: ***"faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."***

We are struck by that simple invitation of Jesus to Philip: ***"Follow me."*** Isn't that always the way it is? Jesus extends the invitation. We confess with Luther "I cannot buy my own thinking or choosing believed in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him." Jesus chooses us, and for that we are eternally grateful. It does not depend on man's choosing.

Notice what Philip now does: ***"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.' 'Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?' Nathanael asked. 'Come and see,' said Philip."*** Philip reaches out to someone else. This is Nathanael, also called Bartholomew in the other Gospels and Acts. But notice how Nathanael mocks Philip and his enthusiasm and his conviction.

Nathanael probably knew his Scriptures, but he probably did not recall the scriptural prophecy linking the Messiah with Nazareth. A backhills town like Nazareth of Galilee – how could it figure in something as important as the Messiah? But Philip didn't argue. He merely invited the skeptical Nathanael, just as Jesus had invited Andrew and John, to come and see. There is no other way. We can't argue or force someone into faith in Jesus. We can only show Jesus as he has revealed himself in his Word and leave the rest to the Holy Spirit. Remember, as you just heard: ***"faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."*** (Romans 10:17)

And we today can do no more and must do no less than Philip. We can invite all, everyone and anyone: come and see. Our intention is to present the truth of the Word of God in every worship service, offering eternal salvation to mankind.

The last verses of our sermon text tell us a great deal about Jesus, and about Nathanael. ***"When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, 'Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.' 'How do you know me?' Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, 'I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Then Nathanael declared, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.' Jesus said, 'You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.' He then added, 'I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.'*** Jesus identifies Nathanael as he truly is. Jesus recognizes he is one who would speak the truth, one who would speak what is on his mind. Jesus identifies Nathanael as a true believer in the Old Testament promises, a true Israelite. In his faith Nathanael was open and true, not false. He was one who was blessed just as we read in Psalm 32:2: ***"Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit."*** Jesus offers an open heaven as the ***"greater"*** thing he has to offer mankind. Jesus was saying 'I am the stairway that links heaven and earth.

Nathanael was impressed that Jesus knew him as Jesus reveals his divine omniscience. The Old Testament gives us examples of people who commonly meditated and prayed in the refreshing shade of a fig tree. Whatever Nathanael had been doing under the fig tree he now recognized that Jesus knew it. And now that Nathanael saw what Jesus knew, he confessed ***"Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."***

Just as Andrew and Philip reached out and extended an invitation, we, too, should extend an invitation to anyone and always be ready to extend that invitation: come and see. Come and hear. We have no idea what God has in store for those who come and hear the word of God. But we know what God offers mankind: eternal life through faith in him. Our calling is to extend the invitation: come and see. Come and hear. Lord, help us point the way to you! Amen.