

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Third Sunday After Epiphany, January 23, 2022**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)  
Hymns: 421, 422:1, 355, 381, 46.  
Lessons: 1 Samuel 3:1-10, Acts 8:26-40, Mark 3:13-19.  
Sermon Text: John 1:43-51.  
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Last Sunday you heard about John the Baptist and what he said about Jesus. ***“John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”*** John 1:29 (NIV) Because John pointed his disciples to Jesus, we heard that Andrew was one of two men who spent the day with Jesus learning. Then you heard that ***“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. Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas’ (which, when translated, is Peter).”*** John 1:41-42 (NIV)

Andrew followed Jesus because John the Baptist told him he was the Redeemer, the Messiah, the Christ. Simon Peter came to Jesus because Andrew told him about Jesus. And Peter followed Jesus because, as Matthew tells us in Matthew 4 ***“‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you [Peter and Andrew] fishers of men.’”*** Matthew 4:19-20 (NIV)

Today let’s talk again about

**FOLLOWING JESUS**

- 1. Jesus invites Philip and Nathanael to follow him.**
- 2. Jesus invites you, again today, to follow him.**

Today, too, we read about men who were not able to keep the news of Jesus the Christ to themselves. They shared it, and in so doing, led others to follow Jesus. Last week, Andrew felt he just had to share the message of good news, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

On this day, Jesus calls Philip. Philip followed Jesus because Scripture tells us directly that Jesus said to him ***“Follow me.”*** We don’t know any more about Jesus’ calling of Philip, but we do know that he was excited and enthusiastic about what he learned from Jesus.

He says with confidence and he’s specific when he tells Nathanael about Jesus. ***“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.”*** He is sure and believes this is the one about whom the whole Old Testament wrote.

Nathaniel was probably pretty excited until he heard the word Nazareth. Then we see that he was skeptical and spoke his mind.

Philip shared his conviction that Jesus was the Savior promised by God in the Old Testament. He and Nathanael, whom he invited to come and learn about Jesus, would get to see and experience that very fact as they spent the better part of three years with Jesus “following” him. They are both included in the twelve Apostles of Jesus.

But at first Nathanael, who is also called Bartholomew in the other three gospels, was not so sure about this Jesus, and voiced his suspicions and skepticism. ***“‘Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?’ Nathanael asked.”*** Perhaps Nathanael knew the scriptures well enough that he knew of no scripture prophecy linking the Messiah with Nazareth. How could what some have called “a backhills town like Nazareth in Galilee” figure in something as important as the Messiah?

Philip doesn't argue with Nathanael. He simply extends an invitation: **“Come and see,’ said Philip.”** There was an invitation. We can't argue or force anyone 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.

Nathaniel's first response to Jesus was that he thought Jesus was from Nazareth. But that appearance was wrong. Appearances are not the important thing. If we were attracted to appearances, we could surely find a more beautiful place to find out about the Savior from all sins than the places we gather to worship. Our places of worship are surely not as spectacular as other churches you may have seen, or especially places like Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, which many in the world think of as the center of Christianity.

If you wanted to find something as grand as heaven, isn't it somewhat logical to think that you could find golden-tongues and platinum promises in a grand cathedral, maybe with stained glass and choirs accompanied by a huge organ and leaders clothed in elegant robes?

This building is kind of a simple place to find such important life-giving words as the followers of Jesus told the jailer in Philippi. He was a man who was in fear of his life and asked **“what must I do to be saved?”** **They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.”** Acts 16:30-32 (NIV) That witnessing happened at a prison! But regardless of the humility of the places in which we worship, we want them to be clean and inviting so they don't immediately turn off someone who is coming to hear the Word of God.

Philip invited Nathanael to come and see and hear what Jesus had to say. Jesus, who was truly the Son of God even while living on earth among men, identified Nathanael as a true believer in the Old Testament promises. **“When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, ‘Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.’”** Nathanael was not one of those of whom Paul later warned, **“For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel”** (Romans 9:6), that is, not every Israelite is a believer. In his faith, Nathanael was open and true, not “false.” He was “blessed”, as the psalmist says in Psalm 32 **“Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.”** Psalm 32:2 (NIV) Jesus in his omniscience called him **“an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!”** John 1:47 (ESV)

Nathanael asked Jesus **“How do you know me?”** Then **“Jesus answered, ‘I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.’”** Because people often sought the shade offered by fig trees, even to meditate and pray; this might have been a good guess, but Nathanael sees, recognizes and understands Jesus' omniscience. Jesus knows all things, and knew about what Nathanael was doing even before Philip told him about Jesus and invited him to come and see and hear. Whatever Nathanael had been thinking, Jesus knew. Had he been praying for the Chosen One of Israel to come? Was he meditating on his soul's eternal welfare? We don't know. However, Jesus knew, and this resulted in a confession of faith: **“Then Nathanael declared, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.’”**

That is the heart of our confession, too. Some people think that we are much too wordy in our confessions today. But the most important reason we have more comprehensive confessions today than the simple words of the Apostles' Creed is that Satan has become so deceptive in getting people to think and believe falsehoods and untruths and half-truths about who Jesus really is. Because Satan and all who play into his hands have grown so bold and out-spoken, we must have statements of our faith and confession, such as the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, our historic Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord, and even several twentieth century written confessions. These confessions do not replace the Bible, but they are clear explanations of the Word of God, which is the sole source and standard of our faith and confession.

The Apostles' Creed just sort of grew. No one sat down at a church meeting and carefully worded what they should say to let others know what they believed. But that is what happened when the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the rest of our confessions were written. Christians needed to say “this is what we believe, teach, and confess”. Jesus' warning to **“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves”** Matthew 7:15 (KJV) is as important today as when he spoke the words while he was on earth.

Jesus had told Nathanael **“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.’”** As an apostle, Nathanael would see many of the miracles

Jesus performed while he was on earth. Jesus adds the picture that he alone is the stairway that links heaven and earth. That will be abundantly clear on judgement day.

In these two men, we see Jesus directly calling, inviting, asking, commanding people to follow him. Have you ever considered why it is that you follow Jesus? What does it take for Jesus to call someone to follow him? How is it that you are following Jesus today and are here today with those who believe, teach, and confess as you do? Jesus had invited Nathanael to follow him. God has invited you to follow him, and that invitation is offered again today.

How is it that you came to follow Jesus? Do you remember the day that you first believed? Was your coming to faith an emotional moment or day you especially remember? Probably not. For many of us, we were brought to God as infants and baptized with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And we believe that baptism works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe, as the words and promise of God declare. ***“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*** Mark 16:16 (KJV)

Perhaps you were disillusioned or disappointed or even angry with a church you were familiar with. Perhaps your invitation was similar to that of Nathanael’s. Perhaps someone invited you to come to church with them and you came to learn more of the truth of God’s Word than you had previously known, and it became your confession to become a member of a correct-teaching Christian congregation. Perhaps you were baptized as a child and didn’t really know what that baptism really did for you until later in life.

That invitation to follow Jesus is issued to you again this morning, even in our hymns. It is something that the child of God awakes to every morning, as he begins the day with prayer and asks God to guide him or her.

Like Nathanael, we have Jesus’ promise: ***“I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”*** Ultimately, we will see Jesus appearing in the heavens on the day of final judgment, giving eternal life in heaven to all who believe he is their Savior.

You have received that invitation to follow Jesus. Don’t be afraid to extend that invitation to others, because God ***“wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”*** 1 Timothy 2:4 (NIV2011)

May your daily hymn be

Savior, I follow on, Guided by Thee,  
Seeing not yet the hand That leadeth me.  
Hushed be my heart and still, Fear I no further ill,  
Only to meet Thy will My will shall be.

Savior, I long to walk Closer with Thee;  
Led by Thy guiding hand, Ever to be  
Constantly near Thy side, Quickened and purified,  
Living for Him who died Freely for me. Amen.  
(The Lutheran Hymnal, 422:1, 4.)