

January 17, 2021

Christ Church, Dallas

John 1:43-51

COME AND SEE

At the start of the story this morning is a point we might miss. “Jesus found Philip.” Philip didn’t find Jesus. Jesus found Philip. This is at the heart of the Christian story. We didn’t find Christ, but Christ found us. We didn’t decide for God. God decided on us.

Paul even wrote in Ephesians 1:4 “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world..”

This is important knowledge, as we progress in our Christian journey, that God has sought us out, rather than vice versa.

And as Jesus encounters Philip, he issues a single command: “Follow me.” We are asked to put Jesus as number one in our lives, that is what is demanded of us as Christians. And as Philip follows Jesus he leaves everything behind. It all has to go when we follow Jesus.

Following Jesus is a radical commitment that demands every aspect of our being. Of course we fall short from time to time and get it wrong – but the intention of radical discipleship should always be before us.

It is also important to notice what Philip did when he went out to follow Jesus. Did he get baptized? Did he join a church? No the first thing he did, according to John, was to find his brother Nathanael and tell him about Jesus!

That is the first rule of being a disciple of Jesus. It is very simple. Tell other people about Jesus. I know, I know we're Episcopalians and so this doesn't come easily.

So often, we think we can't tell other people about Jesus because we don't know enough or we don't know our Bibles well enough...but none of that matters. We don't have to be theologians to be effective. Be passionate and Jesus will do the rest. Remember we didn't find Jesus, he found us.

And secondly, being a disciple means telling others about him.

Thirdly, being a disciple means not losing confidence when the message is not always welcome.

Now Philip didn't get into a deep theological discussion with Nathanael, he just said "Come and see!"

And when it comes to evangelism, that's all we need to keep saying: "Come and see!" We don't need to get involved in heavy theological debates. We just need to say "Don't take my word for it. Come and see!" and then let God do the rest.

Now during the pandemic this presents some logistical problems. We don't have a beautiful sanctuary to invite someone into, we have a ZOOM screen. But I know that during this time of isolation may actually be the best possible time to invite someone to "Come and see."

What will people find when they respond to our "Come and See?" I think even with the restrictions of our remote worship, there are questions we should ask ourselves.

What will they find?

Will people receive a warm welcome? Will they get a sense of God changing lives? Will they have an experience of worship

that gives them access to God? Will they go away after our service with a sense of excitement that something is happening here? Is Jesus at the center of Christ Church? If they come and see will they meet with God?

These are all good questions for us to examine during this time of pandemic and in the future when we return to our worship home.

Returning to the Gospel of today let's remember that Jesus also found Nathanael just as he found Philip. It suggests that he knew Nathanael before he met him. Both brothers thought they had found Jesus but we know Jesus actually found them.

There is a wonderful sense of peace that we gain from the knowledge that God had his hand on us even before we became aware of him.

As Christians, we know that peace and blessing can only derive from our relationship with Jesus. The more we allow Jesus to become the center of our lives, the more we will know peace in our lives.

This seemingly simple passage, a wonderful story about the calling of Philip and Nathanael – is full of teaching on the nature of discipleship.

We are called into a life of peace and blessing with God. Jesus sees us and knows everything about us and understands our deepest needs. And we hope that all who have an encounter with him will find this life-changing peace too.

It is a lifetime's work to follow Jesus. And this work comes with the easiest of instructions..."follow me" and "come and see."

Today we follow and today we come and see.

Amen.