

Sermon John 1 43 51 2nd Sunday after Epiphany Series B

Sermon: 2nd Sunday after Epiphany

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

Theme: Jesus calls.

Goal: To show how Jesus calls us to be His followers. We are His co-workers to call others.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Do you remember when you decided to be a Christian, to be a follower of Christ? I suppose that most of us were brought to the Christian faith when we were baptized as infants. But even so, if you remember the day when you decided to be a Christian, God had called you before, putting the firm conviction into your heart that He loved you and that He wanted you to be His child and follower.

We have in our text Jesus calling two of His disciples: Philip and Nathanael. Let's see how they were called to be Jesus' followers and what we can learn from this.

I – Jesus calls directly

Philip was called as most of the 12 disciples were called: directly. Jesus saw him, and **“he said to him, “Follow me.”** Without doubt and without arguing, Philip followed Jesus.

Abraham was called directly as well. Samuel, as we heard in the Old Testament lesson, was called directly. Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah and many other prophets were called directly. Before they could take a decision, the powerful Word of God touched the heart of those people and they followed God with gladness, serving Him as His prophets and disciples. They never regretted that they followed that majestic and gracious call. They were chosen by God's grace and it was an honor and a privilege for them to be so close to God. They were God's personal

friends!

Jesus is not walking personally among us any more to call people as He had called Philip. God doesn't call people through a dream or a vision any more, as He did in the Old Testament. But, in some sense, He still calls people directly any time when His gracious Word is proclaimed. Nobody is called without the proclamation of God's Word. However, on the other hand, God's Word is proclaimed by someone. God uses His followers to call new followers. St. Paul wrote (Romans 10:14-15): “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!””

II – Jesus calls through a friend/relative, indirectly

The feet of Philip became beautiful when he shared the Good News with his friend Nathanael. Nathanael was not called directly by Jesus, but by his friend Philip. Philip was overjoyed as he was called by Jesus! He couldn't hold that joy for himself, but he immediately “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.””

Nathanael couldn't believe it in the very first moment. He argued against Philip's conviction. Nazareth was a despised town in the North of the country, and nobody would have expected that a prophet could come from Nazareth. Therefore Nathanael's question was: “Can anything good come from Nazareth?””

We know that story by our own experience very well. How many times we try to share some News about Jesus and about our church with some of our relatives and friends, and they always have an excuse or some questions! They resist the invitation God is sending them through us.

But we cannot give up. We love our relatives and friends and we want to have them close to Jesus as well. We don't want to have them wandering in the darkness, without hope and without faith. We want them to walk with us and with our Christian fellows along the right path of Jesus, in the light of the Gospel, lifting their eyes to the hope of eternal life. And we invite them again and again.

Philip didn't answer to Nathanael's argument. He simply said: “Come and see!” No discussion, no defense. Only a good testimony. Philip was convinced about his faith in Jesus, the Messiah, and he wanted to give the same opportunity to his friend Nathanael to meet Jesus personally. **“Come and see!”**

Sometimes we don't have answers to give to the questions raised by our relatives or friends when they resist to our witness. But the Word of Jesus is powerful and He only is able to convince. A devotional time at home, some Bible verse to share, a good experience at the service, - are some ways to share God's Word with our beloved ones who are not really followers.

St. Thomas Watchword for 2012 is: “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you” (Mark 5:19). This matches the testimony Philip gave to Nathanael. Just tell your personal experience, what goes on in your heart, what is your faith, what is your hope. The rest, God will do.

III – Nathanael meeting with Jesus

Nathanael accepted Philip's invitation: “Come and see!” When he approached Jesus, Jesus said to him: “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.” Nathanael was surprised! “How do you know me?” - was his question. And Jesus revealed that He knew much more about Nathanael than he could have imagined!

Jesus knows our inmost, our coming and going, our thoughts and desires. Psalm 139 tells us about God's wisdom and knowledge. Read it

again at home. Read it with your beloved people. - Nobody can hide himself from God. His eyes are always open upon us, even upon those who despise Him. His eternal plan is to save all the people. He doesn't give up His original plan to save humankind. He calls. He calls through us. He wants to have all around Him! Let's give our testimony to our family and to our friends the best we can; and God will use our testimony to call our beloved ones to the true faith, to be His disciples as well.

Conclusion: When Nathanael was convinced by Jesus and confessed his faith: “Master, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel”, Jesus told him that he would see greater things and that he shall see heaven open. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, the heaven is open and we have access to the Father. This is the final goal of our lives and of our faith. Whatever we realize in this life is very important according God's will for the good of the society and for the good of our family. Our job, our studies, our carrier, our hobby, our bank account, our friends, - everything is very important and we cannot despise them. But we know that we can loose everything in less than one minute. What will remain? Our life with God through the faith in Jesus, who takes us to the presence of God for all eternity. We will not have all our doubts solved on this side of heaven, and we will never reach all our material and financial goals. We are always running after these things and making big personal efforts to gain them. But the eternal goal to get eternal life with God is a gift of God by grace and by faith in Jesus. Don't resist to it. When we acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, our King and Savior, - the only perennial good we have, - eternal life is ours.

Jesus is still calling people to be His followers. He calls through His Word, He calls through our testimony. Be sure that Jesus wants to use us as His tools to call others. Be alert to the opportunities God put in front of each of us. His grace is big and His love is without end to save all. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle
Cape Town, 15 January 2012

