

John 1:43-52

Epiphany 2; January 14, 2024

Picture in your mind this story:

The young man from Seattle couldn't believe his luck! He bet all he owned on this trip up to Alaska. He bought his stake in land, he bought all the gear he'd needed, and he took the steamboat north. And once he got settled and started to work the land, he couldn't believe his luck! Eureka! He had found it! He struck gold! And no matter where he dug, he kept pulling up more and more. He knew he couldn't mine it all alone. So, he went home and told his brother to get his help.

"Yeah, sure you did. Sure, you found gold," was his brother's reply. But the young man didn't give up, "Come up to Alaska and see for yourself! I'll even pay for the trip." Well, that offer was too good to pass up, so the brother came up to Alaska. He saw the camp. He saw the gold. He believed and so he stayed. And the two brothers mined a fortune of gold!

Something similar happened in our text this morning. But what Philip found was worth far more than gold! Without hesitation Philip goes to Nathanael and says: **"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."** You can sense the excitement in Philip's voice. You have got to come and see this. This is the one. This is the one that God has promised to us. Perhaps, Philip realized that we have a God who keeps his promises. God's Word has the power to do what he promises.

In order to see what is going on here in our text, you have to go back in time to Abraham. God had come to Abraham and told him that he was going to do some pretty amazing things through him. Moses records those promises in the book of Genesis. God tells Abraham that he was going to make his descendants into a great nation. Through that great nation, all nations on earth will be blessed through you. Those are some pretty big promises to make when Abraham has no children and is 75 years old at the time God gave him those promises. God began small in keeping that promise to Abraham. It began with one son – Isaac. Then it continued to Jacob, and then to Judah. For generations God kept his promise just like he had said. And it grew, and it grew and it grew. By the time of King David, the nation of Israel had grown to a powerful nation. But God didn't stop. Over all these years, God did exactly what he said he was going to do.

Do you know what is so amazing when you look at how God did what he promised? You can't help but marvel at God's kindness. Abraham didn't deserve that promise. Neither did Isaac or Jacob or any of the other descendants of Abraham. They were sinner just like you and me. Yet, he takes very ordinary people and pours his grace on them. This morning, we begin to see Jesus call his disciples to follow him. Next week, we'll see him call some more men to follow him. As you look at them, what do all they in common? They are the least likely people we would pick to follow Jesus. A new president tries to pick the best people possible for his cabinet. Jesus picked unlikely people like fishermen, a tax collector, a political fanatic, a skeptic and doubter to come and follow him. With all of them, you can only marvel at the kindness of God when he calls us to be his disciples.

You can see that kindness of God in our lessons for today. In the first lesson, we are reminded of God's kindness when he promises a woman named Hannah that she will have a child long past the normal child-bearing years. God does what he says he will do. As he grew a little older, Hannah gave her son, Samuel, to serve in the temple of God as she had promised. Today, we see the kindness and patience of God as he calls to Samuel. It took four times for Samuel and Eli to figure out that it was God calling Samuel in the middle of the night. God is patient with them. This past week, I had an appointment somewhere. I didn't know if I would get back to school in enough time to pick up my grandkids to walk them back to our house. When I got done, I realized that I had enough time. So, I called my wife to let her know that I could pick them up. After about a dozen tries, I was getting frustrated. (I was driving back here as I was calling.) Finally, I did get hold of her because she was walking past her phone at the house, and saw that I was calling. We were able to reset some settings on the phone, so that she could hear it ring. But I was not feeling all that patient when I was calling.

Yet, God shows patience to his believers. At first, Nathanael really wasn't all that excited about following Jesus. When Philip tells Nathanael that he needs to come and see this Jesus, son of Joseph from Galilee, he responds: **"Nazareth! Can**

anything good come from there?" Philip says that you'll have to come and see and check him out. Why? God has the power to do what he says it will. Look at the kindness that Jesus shows Nathanael as he comes to see Jesus. Jesus says to him: **"Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."** Jesus was not being sarcastic. He was genuinely complimenting him. You can still hear the skeptic in Nathanael. **"How do you know me?"** Then Jesus says to him: **"I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."** Yet, even though Jesus knew everything about Nathanael, he still called him.

At first, Nathanael was amazed. But I think that Nathanael was a little scared. Clearly, Jesus knew everything that he had done in the past. If Jesus could see him just sitting under a fig tree, then he must be able to see all that he had done wrong in his life as well. Imagine, if God can see everything that we have done wrong, it might bring some fear into our heart as well. Yet, just like Nathanael, God calls us to serve him. He forgives our sins and calls us to follow him. God knows everything about us, even the things that we have forgotten about and calls us to follow him.

In the words of our text, Jesus is just beginning his ministry. For the next three years, these 12 men that he will call to walk with him are going to see some pretty amazing things. **"Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." 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."**

As those two men, Phillip and Nathanael stood in front of Jesus, they may not have understood all that Jesus was about to do. They didn't know how Jesus was about to change their lives forever. But they both knew one thing: **"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."** Jesus has a heart for them and for us. Treasure it. His love is more valuable than any gold you will ever find. Amen.