

Epiphany 2 / January 17, 2021

John 1:45-46

“Philip found Nathaniel and said to him, ‘We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth.’ Nathaniel said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’”

Has anyone asked you to come and see something? Near Christmas, Saturn and Jupiter were in a once in millennium conjunction. Astronomers announced the date and told people to come and see. Did you come and see? People who saw it described it excitedly in glowing terms. People who saw it through a telescope said it was awesome. I sensed their enthusiasm and appreciated their sense of awe, but some things are beyond description and can only be truly appreciated when people see it for themselves. I didn't see it for my myself. It was cloudy and I was lacking in motivation, so I googled the image. It was pretty, but I'm sure it was much more awe inspiring to behold with your own eyes. There are some things that even the highest quality photograph cannot truly depict! There are some things we have to see for ourselves!

Nathaniel was skeptical when Philip told him they had found the Messiah, of whom Moses and the prophets had written, “Jesus of Nazareth.” He wondered if anything good and someone so important could come from a place like Nazareth. Philip didn't try to convince him with his word. He simply said, “*Come and see.*” Nathaniel came and what he saw shook him to the core of his being. Excited? He was ecstatic! He exclaimed, “*Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!*” What did Nathaniel see that caused him to react with such unaffected faith and unbridled enthusiasm? It wasn't Jesus' physical appearance. It was His words! Jesus spoke and Nathaniel saw Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. Epiphany is a season to be in the word and to lead others to the word. In the word we see Jesus as the Son of God. When we see Jesus as the Son of God, we see the embodiment of God's love for the world, our Saviour and dearest friend.

Nathaniel saw Jesus with his eyes, but he saw Him in faith through His words. Many people who saw Jesus with their eyes failed to see Him for who He was; the Son of God, the King of Israel. The residents of Nazareth, his hometown, saw Him grow up, but they knew Him only as the carpenter's son. He didn't look like a king. As Isaiah prophesied, “*He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him.*” People who saw the mighty signs He gave, including restoring wholeness to the disabled and raising the dead, often failed to see Him as the divine Saviour. Many people thought He was a prophet of old returned to the earth, perhaps Elijah who had been translated to heaven without suffering death. The disciples saw differently. Through His words the twelve disciples saw He was the Christ, the Son of the living God and that He had the words of eternal life. Jesus blessed them saying, “*Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.*” The Father revealed this to them through Jesus' words.

The religious leaders; the chief priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, the teachers of the law, didn't deny Jesus did powerful miracles, but they said He did these things because He was working in league with the devil, to deceive people. Nathaniel saw differently, because he saw Jesus through His words. Jesus didn't really say much. He simply said He had seen him at a distance, but that was enough for Nathaniel. He saw the Saviour in His words and believed. We see Jesus in His words so we may believe and so that our faith may grow and become strong. We call other people to see Jesus in His words, so that they too might believe, be made strong in faith and faithfulness. As John said at the close of this gospel, “*These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, that believing you may have life in His name.*”

Do you find it easy to believe? Did you believe quickly when someone invited you to come and see Jesus, or did it take some time? Jesus expressed amazement that Nathaniel believed so quickly and easily. He merely told him He had seen him before Philip came to him. He said, “*Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe?*” We don't know anything about Nathaniel prior to his appearance in John's gospel but in this gospel, we are given insight to the power of God's word, which had been at work in Nathaniel's life for a long time. Jesus identifies Nathaniel as “*an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit.*” Nathaniel was an Israelite, not because he had a Jewish mother. Nathaniel was a true Israelite, because he believed God's word.

In the letter to the Galatians Paul affirmed that the true descendants of Abraham and Israel are those who believe God's promises. He wrote, “*Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.*” Nathaniel believed the words God spoke about the Messiah through Moses and the prophets. When he heard Jesus, he was able to see Him as the Messiah and believe in Him as His Lord. We see Jesus in His words. That's why Jesus affirmed Mary, when she left her sister in the kitchen and sat at His feet to hear His words, saying she had chosen

what was best. It's best to hear the words of God, because whether faith comes easy or hard, whether it comes fast or slow, faith comes from hearing the word of God.

When Jesus asked the Samaritan woman at the well to give Him some water, she was resistant at first and a little checky too. She questioned why He a Jewish man, should ask her a Samaritan woman, for a drink of water. She saw Him, but she didn't see Him rightly, until she listened to his words. When she heard Him speak, her entire demeanour changed and she said, "*Sir I perceive that you are a prophet.*" After further conversation she realized He was more than a prophet. She went into the village and told everyone what she heard, saying "*Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?*" They came at her invitation, but after hearing Him speak they said, "*It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.*" Through the word and by the working of the Holy Spirit, God blesses those who listen with ears to hear, eyes to see and faith to receive Jesus into their hearts as Saviour.

There is a pattern in our text and throughout the gospel of John. Jesus calls people. They believe and go and call others to come and see Him for themselves. Jesus opens their hearts to faith. They see and go and call others to come and see. The Holy Spirit reveals Jesus to John the Baptizer at His baptism. He sees the Spirit rest on Jesus in the form of a dove. He hears the divine voice declare Jesus His beloved Son. John believes and tells others that Jesus is the Son of God, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. They come, see Jesus, hear His words and believe. Then they go and call others to "*come and see.*" Philip finds Nathaniel and tells him to come and see Jesus. Nathaniel comes, sees Jesus hears His words and believes.

Jesus calls the Samaritan woman. She hears His voice, listens to His words, believes and goes to call others to "*come and see.*" They come, hear and believe. All these people saw Jesus with their eyes, but what they saw through His words was of the greatest importance. They saw Jesus physically with their eyes, but through His words they saw He was not just a man, but the word of God clothed in the flesh and blood of a man. They saw what John wrote in the prologue to his gospel, "*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*" To all who saw Him through His words and received Him in their hearts as Saviour, He gave the power to become the children of God with an inheritance of eternal life.

John's gospel begins with seeing, believing and telling others. It concludes with believing, seeing and telling others. Jesus appears to the 10 apostles on the evening of Easter Sunday to show Himself to them alive. Thomas is absent. They go and tell him, "*We have seen the Lord.*" He doesn't believe it! Eight days later Jesus appears to the apostles again. Thomas is with them. He sees and believes. Jesus says, "*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*" We don't believe Jesus by seeing Him. We see Jesus, by believing Him as He comes to us in His word. That's why John says "*these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*" These things are written, so we may believe in Him as our Saviour and have life in His name. These things are written, so we may bring others to Jesus, so that in His word, they also may see Him as the Son of God, the King of Israel and receive Him in their hearts through faith as their Saviour and Lord. God bless us with faith to believe. God bless us with faith to call others to come and see Jesus! In Jesus' Name. Amen