

Second Sunday after Epiphany, January 17, 2021
“Come and See” (John 1:43-51)

My son, Ben, has always loved the winter season. He especially enjoys snow and other forms of winter precipitation. As a kid, when snow was mentioned in the forecast, he immediately became a Weather Channel junkie, closely following the approaching storm and getting more and more excited about the possibility of a white blanket covering the landscape. He would often call me to the TV, *Dad, come and take a look at this*, he would say, wanting to share his excitement with me. *I saw the forecast this morning, I'd say. I know, but it has changed. Just come and see.*

Instead of turning to the Weather Channel, he now follows certain meteorologists on the internet. When snow is in the forecast, he will send me a link so I'll have the most up-to-date information or a text with the latest accumulation prediction.

It has always amazed me how a snowstorm can turn adult men into boys again. Ben knows that's true for me, as well. When it began snowing really hard a week ago, I called to the bedroom where Susan was dealing with a sinus headache: *It's really snowing now. Come and see.* When I realized she really didn't feel like coming, I went to the bedroom and threw open the shutters so she could see the snow for herself. And the truth is, if there had been any amount of accumulation, I would have been out riding around in my truck.

Yes, we can get really excited about the snow – probably because we get so little – and we want others to share our excitement. If only we could carry that same excitement over into our faith life. If only we were so excited about all the Lord has done for us, that we couldn't wait to share it with others so they could experience the same thing for themselves.

In our gospel text for this morning, we read about a man who was almost as excited about telling his friend about Jesus as a kid is about being out of school for snow. Phillip was from the fishing village of Bethsaida, the same hometown of Andrew and Peter. Somehow, Phillip had heard about Jesus. Tradition says that he was a fisherman, so perhaps he had worked with Peter and Andrew, and had heard about Jesus from them. We really don't know, but there was something about Phillip that Jesus liked. So, one day Jesus went to Phillip and said, *Follow me.* And Phillip did.

Now comes the exciting part. According to John, no sooner than he was called, Phillip took off to tell his friend, Nathanael, about Jesus. Now we don't know a lot about the relationship between Phillip and Nathanael, but we do know that Phillip thought enough of Nathanael to go tell him the best news he had ever heard: *We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote. His name is Jesus of Nazareth.*

Both Phillip and Nathanael had been looking for something. They knew how much they needed a Savior. They knew that God had promised one, and they were watching and waiting for him to come. Yet, we read that Nathanael's reaction was less than enthusiastic when he found out Jesus was from Nazareth. *Can anything good come out of Nazareth?* he asked. Perhaps he viewed Nazareth as a little po-dunk town that had never produced anything positive. Or perhaps, he

knew that the OT prophesies contained nothing about Nazareth when speaking about the coming Messiah.

We're not sure why he spoke as he did. We just know that because of his preconceived ideas, he was not impressed. But Phillip was persistent. Phillip could have argued with Nathanael. He could have presented an elaborate case for Jesus. Or he could have simply given up. But he didn't. Phillip was excited about what he had found, and in his excitement, he simply issued an invitation: *Come and see*.

Nathanael was like many of us. We, too, have to see before we believe. But once Nathanael met Jesus – and Jesus told him he had seen him under the fig tree – he knew Jesus was the one he had been waiting for. Immediately, Nathanael became a believer, signed on as one of Jesus' disciples, and his life was never the same.

I can almost hear Jesus laughing as he turns to Nathanael and says, *You believe because I told you I saw you under a fig tree? Well, hang on my friend. You ain't seen nothing yet!* And boy, was that ever an understatement.

My friends, we have heard the same invitation that Phillip and Nathanael did. Like them, we know our need for a Savior. We know that we can't please God by ourselves. The guilt we feel deep down reminds us of that. Every time we gossip or talk about somebody behind their backs, every time we worry about something because we fail to trust in God, every time we let anything interfere with our relationship with God, we show again how much we need a Savior.

But the good news is that he has come to each of us and said, *Follow me*. Maybe that invitation came through our parents who brought us to church and first told us about Jesus. Maybe it came through a Sunday School teacher, or a pastor, or a friend. But Jesus found us, and invited us to follow him. Just like Phillip and Nathanael, we have encountered the one that Moses and the prophets wrote about, the Savior God had promised to save us from our sins.

Yes, we, too, have seen our Savior, and along with him, we have seen all the blessings he brings. We have seen the forgiveness of our sins, the peace he provides when we are distraught, the hope of a certain future in heaven and the joy that brings us. All this comes to us by our Savior simply coming to us and saying, *Follow me*. And truly, my friends, even though we've witnessed all this, we ain't seen nothing yet. Our Lord has so much more in store for those who follow him and bear witness to his love and grace.

What is interesting about this text is the level of excitement. When Jesus called Phillip and Phillip realized that he had found the Savior, he couldn't keep his mouth shut about it. Once he had received the invitation, he immediately went out and extended the invitation to someone else. *Come and see*.

We find that there were some immediate results when Phillip and Nathanael came to see Jesus – the same results you and I experienced when we came to Christ, and the same results that will be experienced by anyone we bring to Christ.

The first result is the desire to learn more, the desire to follow Jesus. These men became two of Jesus' disciples who spent the next three years learning from Jesus. That's one result of coming to see Jesus. Hearing his Word produces a desire to hear the Word again, to continue to learn. True disciples of Jesus love to hear his Word, to study his Word, to learn more from his Word. His word makes us eager to understand, eager to let that life-giving Word take root deep in our hearts and produce the fruits of the Spirit in our lives. That's what happened to Phillip and Nathanael, and that same thing still happens today when people come and see Jesus.

The second thing seeing Jesus produces is a desire to share. We see that time and time again in the Bible. A few verses earlier in this chapter from John, we hear of Jesus calling Andrew, and are told that the first thing Andrew did was to find his brother, Simon, and tell him. And that's exactly what Phillip did, as well. He went to tell Nathanael. The effect of seeing Jesus and being called to faith in him is a desire to share this good news.

We like to tell other people good news, don't we? We almost can't stop ourselves when we have really good news to share. We're like the people on those TV commercials who lowered their cholesterol or saved 15% on their auto insurance. They want to tell everyone they see. They want to share their good news. And that's the same excitement we should have about our faith. I mean, what better news could there be that that we have seen Jesus, the one who saves us from our sin and the one who promises us eternal life? Once we have heard the invitation, we should want nothing more than to share it. And that's what we are called to do. We're called to bear witness to his love and grace by faithfully sharing what God has done in our lives and what he promises yet to do. For truly, we ain't seen nothing yet. God is still working miracles in our lives every day. He is still answering prayer and using us in wonderful ways we may never know.

What we need to do is be faithful. In terms of sharing the good news, we're called to be like Ben when there's snow in the forecast, to spread our excitement about Christ and infect others with it. But even more, we're called to be like Phillip. We're called to tell others, *Come and see*. We're called to share the promise, to assure others that no matter how good life may seem, when they commit to following Christ, they truly ain't seen nothing yet.

You see, evangelism really isn't a difficult thing to do. This text shows us just how easy it is. All we need to do is share the invitation, then stand back and let the power of Christ move hearts and change lives. And that's what will happen. Amen.