

Sermon
2nd Sunday after Epiphany B
January 15, 2012

When the gospel story begins today, Jesus is in Galilee.

He finds Philip and he says to him “Follow Me”.

I want to point something out right here...Jesus went to Galilee and found Philip...He didn't wait for Philip to come and find Him. He went to Galilee. Because, we have a God that did not wait for us to come back to him...to be reconciled by our own initiative. God sent Jesus to us...God came to us...He didn't wait for us to come to him first.

Jesus' ministry is all about going to the people.

Going to the temple and teaching...

going to the seaside and calling his disciples...

going up on the mountain to talk to the multitudes...

seeking out God's people...

And today he was seeking Philip. As soon as Jesus calls to Philip,

Philip goes to find Nathanael, and he says to him "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." But Nathanael is skeptical... and he says to Philip, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" You see, Nathanael lived in Bethsaida , not too many miles from Nazareth. He knew that there was a Roman Garrison stationed in Nazareth and most people of that time believed that because the Garrison was stationed there the town was tainted. Of course it's not like the Nazarene's were asked " excuse me, but would you all mind hosting the occupiers of Israel", and they were powerless to do anything to prevent it. But because Nazareth housed the Roman Garrison, they were considered traitors by association, even though if they did not provide services for the Romans they would have simply taken them anyway. So we can see the reasoning that makes Nathanael skeptical. But, notice here ... Philip doesn't argue with Nathanael. nor does he try to persuade him, he simply says to him..."Come and See". Come and see for yourself

what good can come out of Nazareth. Because Philip is his friend and because he knows that Philip has already met Jesus, Nathanael decides to give it a try; to put his preconceived ideas on hold for a bit. He gets up from under the fig tree and goes to see this “Jesus” person that seems to have ignited his friend interest.

Most of us remember what happens next, you can almost see it coming, can't you? Nathanael, all smug and condescending, strolls over to meet Jesus, but before he can form any kind of opinion, Jesus sees him coming toward him and he says ...

“here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit”

Well Nathanael is pretty much taken aback by this...“where did you get to know me?” he asks...“I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you”...is Jesus' answer... But really Jesus already knew the real Nathanael. Jesus knew his heart, just like he knows all of our hearts. He knew Nathanael was a good man and that he could be an even better man. Because you see, Jesus sees us as we can be, not as we are. He sees our full potential, not what we have settled for. So now Nathanael does a complete about face...

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"Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus seems just a bit surprised by this enthusiastic reply and answers him...

"Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? "

You ain't seen nothin yet.

"You will see greater things than these."

And always true to His word, see them he did...

People's lives transformed...

Multitudes fed...

Demons dispatched...

The blind given sight...

The sick healed...

The leper cleansed...

The dead raised...

Jesus crucified...

The risen Jesus when he visits them in the upper room...

Jesus cooking breakfast for them on the sea of Tiberius after his resurrection...

You see, Nathanael's full name was from the Aramaic, was Nathanael Bar Tolmay, meaning son of Tolmay, or son of the furrows, perhaps his father was a ploughman. In the Greek it's, Bartholomew. And as we all know, Bartholomew was one of twelve apostles. So he really did see it all.

Today you and I can say the same thing that Philip said to Nathanael...over two thousand years ago

We can say it to **our** friends. We can say it to **our** neighbors. We can say it to our co-workers...

Come and see.

Come and see how God can change our lives.

Come and see how we can find peace.

Come and see how it is to belong to a community, where people really care about each other.

Come and see the grace.

Come and see the love.

Come and see what good really did come out of Nazareth

Come and see.