

“Jesus Says ‘Follow Me’”

January 14, 2018

Our Savior’s Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Tyson Labuhn

Grace mercy and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

“Somebody once said that in looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy. And if you don't have the first, the other two will kill you. You think about it; it's true. If you hire somebody without integrity, you really want them dumb and lazy.” Warren Buffet once said these words concerning how he goes about hiring people to work.

While integrity is important, over the course of the next two Sundays, our Gospel readings focus on how Jesus went about calling some of His first disciples. Our Midweek Connect email called these first disciples Jesus’ “motley crew” of men that would become not just His first followers but also His Apostles to share the Good News. That Jesus is the very Messiah who has come into the world, the Son of the Living God, who has come not just for the nation of Israel but for all people so that they might be reconciled to God and live with Him once again.

Just before our Gospel reading, in verses 35-42, Andrew, John, and Peter begin following Jesus shortly after His baptism when He was declared to be the Lamb of God. And in our Gospel for today, Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael. Similar to Andrew, who went and told Peter that they had found the Messiah. After Jesus said,

“Follow me” to Philip, he too enthusiastically went to Nathanael to say to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. To Philip, Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of God. The very Lamb of God, who had come in the flesh to reconcile God and Man. To Philip, it didn’t matter what clothes Jesus wore, it didn’t matter what Jesus ate. Jesus was there, and he couldn’t wait to tell Nathanael.

Unlike Peter, Nathanael, who Jesus said was an Israelite in who there is no deceit, was skeptical of Philip’s Good News. But Nathanael wasn’t there when John the Baptist declared Jesus to be the Lamb of God. Philip told him that the Messiah was there, the one of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote about for hundreds of years, and this Jesus was from Nazareth. Nazareth? He certainly may have been skeptical. Because if you take a look at the Old Testament, especially Micah 5:2, you would know that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. Not the town of Nazareth, where there was Roman garrison. So Nathanael says to Philip, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

Did you know that the season of Epiphany celebrates the fact that the light of Christ has come into the world? The season of Epiphany comes after the 12 days of Christmas and takes us up to the season of Lent. And since Christmas and New Years are over for another year, it seems that many of us have gone back into our regular routines. The lights that once decorated our homes and Christmas trees, along with the decorations have been put away. Even though the days are slowly getting longer, the cherry blossom festival still seems like a long way away. Even Superbowl Sunday doesn’t happen for several more weeks. This time of the year, disappointment and frustration with others or situations can lead us to skepticism and doubt. We can have doubt from time to time. Doubts about ourselves, doubts with others, and doubts with God if

dwelled upon for any length of time, can be damaging to our relationships. When that happens, we can begin to say to ourselves: can anything good come out of this situation?

But there is Good News. Jesus, having been Baptized in the Jordan River, sought out ordinary men to be his apostles. He sees them even when they think that no one is watching. He knows them even before they are aware of His presence and He comes to them to give them hope. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, who would later die with all our sins on the cross, so that we too might receive the forgiveness when we repent of our sins. Forgiveness that is ours through Him. And because of that forgiveness, we have hope in His Word.

Philip enthusiastically said to Nathanael, “Come and see” and the Word of God overcame Nathanael’s doubt and suspicion. Jesus said to Nathanael, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” This permeated his Spirit, enabling him to faithfully proclaim Jesus to be the Son of God, the King of Israel. And in return, Jesus said to Nathanael, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” You see, God reveals and continues to reveal the way to Himself through His Word. And as His Spirit lives in and through us, our otherwise ordinary lives of doubt and skepticism become bright lives of hope and faith.

The American author, Richard Carlson, once wrote, “The old adage, ‘If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is’ ISN’T always correct. In fact, the suspicion, cynicism, and doubt that are inherent in this belief can and does keep people from taking advantage of excellent opportunities.” These excellent opportunities or blessings are revealed to us by faith and given to us by God Himself. While we can be skeptical, and we can struggle with doubt from time to time, the blessings of Word and

Sacrament restore and open up a whole new way for us, as well as all people in the world, to live their lives full of hope.

Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh, is our hope from God in whom we trust. His integrity, intelligence, and energy is out of this world. He calls us and we follow by the faith this is our identity as Christians - given to us by God Himself that enables ordinary people – like you and me – and makes us a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession that we might proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

And now may that peace which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in that same Christ Jesus, both now and always. In Jesus' Name. Amen.