



January 14, 2018 - A Matter Of Being Found! Given by Rev. Mattei

43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47 When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." 49 Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." 51 And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (John 1)

What?

- Jesus *found* Philip and called him. Philip *found* Nathanael and invited him. Nathanael *found* the Lord and professed his faith.
- Philip's enthusiastic evangelism after finding the Lord.
- Nathanael's suspicion, resisting prejudice and skeptic rationalization.
- Philip's persistence after Nathanael's rejection: not an easy conversion. Was he trying to convert him or just witness to what transformed his life? Why evangelism?
- Jesus' affirmation and celebration of Nathanael.
- Nathanael's implicit acknowledgment of being known and continued suspicion about Jesus' knowledge of him.
- Jesus' further revelation about Nathanael.
- Nathanael's overcome suspicion and surprise profession of faith. His life snapped unexpectedly into focus and was sold.
- Jesus' promise of future spiritual insights and revelations.

This text, which falls during the season of Epiphany, is an epiphany. Epiphanies are manifestations of the presence of God and tend to transform people. This is seen in Nathaniel's change and in an epiphany-induced change that Martin Luther King, Jr.'s describes in his book, *Stride Toward Freedom*:

I was ready to give up. With my cup of coffee sitting untouched before me, I tried to think of a way to move out of the picture without appearing a coward. In this state of exhaustion, when my courage had all but gone, I decided to take my

problem to God. With my head in my hands, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud.

The words I spoke to God that midnight are still vivid in my memory. "I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I've come to the point where I can't face it alone.

At that moment, I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced God before. It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice saying: "Stand up for justice, stand up for truth; and God will be at your side forever." Almost at once my fears began to go. My uncertainty disappeared. I was ready to face anything.¹

So what?

We all have a story to tell! An epiphany, an encounter with the Lord which has marked us forever becomes our stepping stone for a transformed and transformative life. Even those with a gradual growth in the faith can speak of significant "Aha!" moments when life is turned around or enriched with deeper significance. Those are the moments that mark us: we are not the same anymore and we can't keep the transformative presence of our Lord hidden. We are compelled to shout to the world: Jesus Christ is Lord. We become aware that what we proclaim in baptism comes true: our old self has died and we arise to the new self; we don't belong to ourselves anymore but to the Lord.²

We discover our body as the temple of the Spirit.³ However, as vessels of the Spirit we do not seek to become more spiritual. We're already inherently spiritual beings (on account of being made in the image and likeness of God⁴) and our job is learning how to be good humans! Our life of disciples is to learn from Jesus' humanity and renounce anything that does not bring honor to God, anything that ignores, denigrates, exploits or objectifies other human beings. We are liberated from something dehumanizing for something that celebrates our humanity: in Jesus we call others to discover their true self, connected to God and loved by God: a human being for whom Jesus gave his life so that we may know how much we are loved. This our actions and our words ought to proclaim to the world.

Than what?

Spend some time this week, maybe five minutes a day, and reflect on those transformative stories where Goodness and Grace have touched you. Than spend some time in thanksgiving and contemplation. Rediscover that Fire and Holy Energy in you that has turned you around and allowed you to grow in the Spirit, and find a way, a place and a time to tell others. Tell those who dispare: God loves you. Tell those who feel lonely: God is with you. Tell those who feel

¹ Martin Luther King Jr, *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*, 124–125.

² Galatians 2:20; Romans 14:8

³ 1 Corinthians 6:19

⁴ Genesis 1:26

helpless: God is your strength. Then go and love; be present to them; be their support and solid rock.