

“Follow Me!”  
John 1:35-51  
Reading: Psalm 145:8-21

Bethany Baptist Church  
February 16, 2020

...pray...

*John the Baptist* introduced *Jesus of Nazareth* to Israel and to history.

John appeared in the *Judean wilderness* preaching a baptism of *repentance* and *preparation*, quoting the **OT** prophet Isaiah: “*Make straight the way of the Lord.*”

When challenged concerning his *identity* and *authority*, the Baptizer was humble but direct: “*No!*” **No**, I’m **not** the *Messiah*, nor *Elijah*, nor the *Prophet*.

And though my baptism *anticipates* the Messiah, “*I’m not even fit to untie His sandals and wash His feet.*”

And then, a Man walked *out* of the crowds and *straight towards* John.

The King’s herald *lifted* his voice: “*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” ... “*This is the Son of God.*”

The crowds undoubtedly *pushed forward* and *strained* to catch a glimpse of this rabbi from Galilee.

Numbered among the crowd were some friends from Galilee – *disciples of John*.

But soon to be *followers of the Lamb!*

**Let’s pick up that narrative in John 1:35-51.**

**John the Baptist launches an evangelism avalanche!**

- 1. It began with the *Baptizer*, and Andrew and John (vv.35-40).**
- 2. From *Andrew* to Simon Peter (vv.40-42).**
- 3. From *Jesus* to Philip (vv.43-44).**
- 4. From *Philip* to Nathaniel (vv.45-46).**
- 5. And in every encounter – we find the *Lord Jesus* (vv.47-51)!**

**John's mission was to prepare men and women to repent and follow Jesus. When Jesus arrived, the Baptizer pointed two of his disciples to the Lamb of God.** (vv.35-40)

1. **V.35** begins “again the next day,” reminding us that our author is tracing the first week of Jesus’ public ministry – from the Jews questioning John about his identity (19 – day 1) to a wedding celebration in Cana (2:11 – close of the week). Our text this morning covers days three and four of that week.
2. And for the **second** day in a row Jesus is among the crowds, and for the **second** day in a row, John cries out, “Behold, the Lamb of God!”
  - a. Perhaps that sounds a little odd to you, but **not** to the Jewish gathered at the banks of the Jordan!
  - b. Their Scriptures were filled with images of the lamb: on **Mt. Moriah** with Abraham and Isaac, in **Egypt** with Moses and the slave-nation of Israel, with **Moses** and the sacrifices of the Law, with **Isaiah** and the Lamb led to slaughter for the transgressions of God’s people.
3. And for the **second day** in a row, **two** friends hear John’s voice, crying in the wilderness.
  - a. They are John’s disciples – followers, but they have come to this herald in search of the King.
  - b. And now their master is pointing to the One who is the **Master** of all!
  - c. Without ceremony, explanation, or recorded comment, the **two** leave John to follow Jesus.
4. Jesus turned and saw the **two** men: “What do you seek?”
  - a. “Rabbi – teacher – where are You staying?”
  - b. It was a polite request for an audience. The **two** men wanted to speak to Jesus. They had oh-so-many questions!
  - c. His response was a warm invitation: “Come, and you will see.” (Jesus’ words could be translated: “Come – and I **want** you to come – and you will see.”)

- d.* The day was drawing to a close, around **4:00** in the afternoon.
    - i.* They spent the rest of the day together with Jesus! Undoubtedly they shared a meal.
    - ii.* What were the questions they asked? What were Jesus' answers?
    - iii.* This is like a preview of the **two** men on the road to Emmaus – hours after the resurrection (Luke 24)! They met Jesus. Do you remember what happened next...?
      - 1.* Beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.
      - 2.* All they could say was: “Were our hearts not **burning** within us while He was speaking to us...while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”
  - e.* By the way, the **two** men were Andrew – Simon Peter's brother (40), and...John, the author of our fourth gospel. I know he **doesn't** name himself, but that's exactly his style – his “invisible signature.”
  - f.* And so, by the end of the day, **John's** disciples had become **Jesus'** disciples. Which was the Baptizer's mission!
5. The two disciples heard John speak, and they followed Jesus (37). John was **not** an empire builder! In fact, the only kingdom he was building was Jesus' kingdom.
- a.* Beloved, whose kingdom are you building? Are you willing to decrease so Jesus can increase?
  - b.* Are His kingdom, His commandments, and His Great Commission even on your radar this morning?

6. Then Jesus asked them: “What do you seek?” Maybe that sounds simple, but when **Jesus** asks you that question, it bears the freight of all eternity!
  - a. “What do you seek?” Are you looking for the Lamb of God? Do you feel weight of your sins? Do you want to be reconciled to the God who created you? ... Do you want to follow Jesus...?
  - b. Jesus says, “Come – **and I want you to come** - and you will see!”

**From Andrew to Simon Peter (read vv.40-42).**

1. Whatever Jesus said to John and Andrew, it was too important (too good) to keep to themselves! Andrew immediately went looking for his brother, Simon Peter.
  - a. The brothers made their living as fisherman on the Sea of Galilee..
  - b. And both, it appears from the context, were seeking the Messiah as disciples of John the Baptist. So imagine Simon’s amazement at Andrew’s stunning claim: “We have found the **Messiah** – the Christ!”
    - i. “Messiah” (Gr. Christ) is a term that only appears in John’s gospel.
    - ii. It was the title for the long promised, long anticipated Son of David (2 Sam 7). Most Jews (incl. these men) pictured Messiah in a mix of religious, political, economic, and military terms.
    - iii. Messiah was thought to be a “Super-David” who would kick out the Roman occupiers and restore the glorious Israel of old!
    - iv. “Simon – we’ve found **Him!**”

- c. Andrew brings Simon to Jesus, and Jesus knows Simon immediately. In fact, if you know anything about Simon Peter, it's clear that Jesus understands more than the man's name!
  - i. Because the **first** thing Jesus does is give Simon a potent new nickname – “Cephas” – (Gr. Petra, Peter) → **Rock!**
  - ii. Now, nobody named anybody Petra in Jesus' day, but Jesus has just given Simon Peter the name he will bear for all eternity.
  - iii. And he will bear it as one of Jesus' most faithful and colorful disciples. The Galilean fisherman will become the granite foundation of Christ's Church!
  - iv. But for now, Peter has become another one of Jesus' first disciples.
  
- 2. **Andrew** – what a guy! He **hasn't** followed Jesus for even **24** hours, and he's already bringing people to Messiah!
  - a. In fact, **Andrew** is mentioned just **three** times in John's Gospel, and each time he brings someone to Jesus: Simon Peter (41), a little boy with a brown bag lunch, and finally a group of eager Greek worshipers, the week of Jesus' final Passover.
  - b. Wouldn't you like be an Andrew...? Finding. Speaking. Bringing.
  - c. That's what we mean by “Find your one.” ... That's what makes for a “Go & Tell Church.”

3. **Simon.** What do you remember about Simon? Do you remember that he walked on water...until he **didn't**? Do you remember that he bragged about his bravery...until he **denied** his Master? What kind of a Rock is **that**!?!
  - a. I want to assert that the **Son of God** saw all that coming, and still confidently rebranded Simon as Peter – the Rock.
  - b. How could Jesus say that...? Beloved, I read a great comment on Jesus' confidence in Simon Peter: **“Jesus can make you what He calls you to be!” 2X**
  - c. Do you have days when you **don't** feel like: a saint, a child of God, a brother/sister of Christ, a new creation, an overcomer (me too!)...?
  - d. Beloved, our story isn't over, and you and I and Simon Peter are testimonies to the truth that Jesus can make you what He calls you to be!

**Then Jesus called a man named Philip (read vv.43-44).**

1. Perhaps these newly-minted disciples lodged that night where Jesus' was staying – we **can't** be certain. But the next day (the fourth day) Jesus' determined to travel from Bethany beyond the Jordan into Galilee.
  - a. But first, Jesus paid a visit to Philip.
  - b. Because Philip was from Bethsaida (44), yet Jesus approached him in Bethany, I assume Philip was...
    - i. Another one of John the Baptist's disciples, and...
    - ii. Acquainted with Andrew and Simon Peter (all three were from Bethsaida) and possibly John (who was hanging out w/ Andrew), and...
    - iii. Like those **three**, was probably a fisherman. At the end of the John's gospel, Philip may be one of the seven who follows Simon on a fishing expedition (John 21).

- c. And, after all, the name “Bethsaida” (Philip’s hometown) means, “place of the fishery!”
  - i. Now, after Jerusalem and Capernaum, Bethsaida is the most frequently mentioned town in the Gospels (~2000), and Jesus probably spent a lot of time there.
  - ii. In Bethsaida, the Lord healed a blind man, and not far outside Bethsaida Jesus fed the multitudes (one of two such miracles); Matt 11 indicates that Christ probably performed many other miracles there.
  - iii. But it was also Bethsaida (Chorazin, Capernaum) that Christ condemned for its unbelief and failure to repent.
- 2. Yet Philip did **not** fail to repent and belief, as Jesus extends the **second** invitation of our text (43): “**Follow Me.**” Philip followed...

**And Philip didn’t waste any time finding his friend Nathaniel.**

- 1. **Nathaniel** is an interesting guy! **Read vv.45-46.**
- 2. Philip’s more detailed appeal to his friend might be a hint that Nathaniel spent a lot of time reading his Torah and thinking about Messiah (more in just a few minutes).
  - a. Philip appeal is based on Scripture: “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets wrote.”
    - i. After all, it is the Scriptures that must validate the Messiah’s identity.
  - b. Philip then tied the prophecy to a person: Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. (By the way, “son of Joseph,” **w/o** explanation, reminds us that many of John’s first readers had already read Matthew and Luke.)



3. Nathaniel appears to dig in. The Nazareth connection **doesn't** connect!
  - a. Nazareth was a mighty small town for such a big prophetic claim!
  - b. And Galilee was considered to be on the wrong side of the tracks!
  - c. But most importantly, do you know what Moses and the Prophets say about Nazareth...? Absolutely nothing.
  - d. **Messiah?** “What good can possibly come out of Nazareth?”
4. But Nathaniel's friend is undaunted. After all, we're talking about The Lamb of God and taking away our sins! Philip is convinced that Nathaniel needs to meet Jesus!
  - a. “Come and see!” Not, “**Go** and see!” But, “Come (i.e., come **with me**) and see!”
  - b. Philip had “found his one,” and he wasn't about to give up!

**And in every encounter on this page – we find the Lord Jesus!**

1. John the Baptist pointed Andrew and John to Jesus. Andrew brought Simon Peter to Jesus. Philip invited Nathaniel to Jesus. Each one brings someone to Jesus, and then Jesus takes over! Consider skeptical Nathaniel (**read 47-51**).
2. *Philip and Nathaniel* arrive on the scene, *and* Jesus cuts to the chase, and Nathaniel is taken aback!
  - a. The Lord knows who Nathaniel **is!** *How is that even possible?*
    - i. Jesus says Nathaniel is the real deal – a true Israelite – devoid of deceit.
    - ii. Perhaps our Lord knows about Nathaniel's skeptical but sincere response to Philip! “Can any good come out of Nazareth?”
    - iii. How did Jesus know that!?!

- b. The Lord also knows what Nathaniel has been **doing** (48)!
- i. “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”
  - ii. Now according to tradition, devout Jews in the 1<sup>st</sup> century considered the fig tree a great place to have their quiet times – to pray and read the Scriptures (Law and the Prophets, 45).
  - iii. Nathaniel had been studying his Bible – but how could this Nazarene know that!?! How could Jesus know Nathaniel’s heart and his habits? Only God knows our hearts...
- c. Nathaniel had been all **out**, but now he’s all **in**! “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel!”
- i. Nathaniel knows his Bible, and he knows he’s just used a couple of Old Testament titles that point straight to the Messiah!
  - ii. **E.g., in Psalm 2**, a Coronation Hymn, God’s speaks of His Son as Israel’s king: [*God:*] But as for Me, I have installed **My King** upon Zion, My holy mountain. [*Messiah*]: I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, “You are **My Son**, today I have **begotten** You.”
3. But Jesus **isn’t** finished (50)...
- a. Nathaniel, You and I have just begun! You believe because I saw *you*? I’m just getting started – and you will be My witness!
    - i. In fact, at the close of John’s gospel, our author will confess that Jesus performed so many miracles you **couldn’t** write them all down!
    - ii. And Nathaniel (John, Andrew, Peter, Philip) were there to see them **all**!

- b. Then Jesus *closes the day* with a preview of the *greatest miracle* of all time, and He does it in a way that *rewinds* back to *the Law and the Prophets* (**read v.51**).
- i. Jesus ties a dream from the patriarch **Jacob** to a dream from the prophet **Daniel**, and applies them *both* to Himself. Do you *recognize* Jesus allusions? **Nathaniel** does...
  - ii. Isaac's son *Jacob* was on journey to find a wife (he ended up with **four!**).
    1. He fell asleep with a *rock* for a *pillow*. In the night, Jacob had a *vision* in a *dream*. A *ladder* went up from *earth* to *heaven*. Going up and down the ladder were *angels of God*.
    2. Jacob awoke in *holy fear* (Gen 28:17): "*How awesome is this place, it is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.*"
  - iii. Then, for the first time in John's Gospel, Jesus identifies Himself as the *Son of Man*. This is Jesus' favorite *messianic title*, one He applied to Himself often.
    1. Jesus is the *Son of Man*, straight out of the prophet Daniel's vision in **Daniel 7**. The prophet wrote, *And to Him [the Son of Man] was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.*
  - iv. *Pull them together, **Jacob** and **Daniel***; here is Jesus' point: the *Son of Man*, the *King of the nations*, is the only passage between heaven and earth, by merit of His *sin-paying crucifixion* and *death-defeating resurrection*.

***Nathaniel, the Son of God, the King of Israel, has called you. Follow Him, and you will see greater things!***

Several years ago, the theologian *J.I. Packer* wrote an excellent book titled *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*.

His point was that we have a *responsibility* to bring people to Christ and it is also true that Christ brings people to Himself.

In **John 1**, *John the Baptist* started this *avalanche of evangelism* by pointing *Andrew* and *John* to Jesus.

*Andrew* then brought his brother *Simon* to Jesus.

*Philip* brought his friend *Nathaniel* to Jesus.

We could *learn* some things from these guys!

The Baptizer was more *focused* on building God's Kingdom than his own.

*Andrew* and *Philip* were *concerned* for their family and friends.

*Philip* *didn't give up* when *Nathaniel* first *pushed back*: "*Come and see!*"

But in every encounter, the *heavy lifting* was done by Jesus.

"*What do you seek?*" "*Come – and I want you to come – and see.*"

"*Follow Me!*"

With these words, Jesus *drew* and *saved* His first followers.

Then, at the end of His ministry (John 12), the *Son of Man* said this:

"*And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.*"

He is speaking of the *saving necessity* of His crucifixion...

But allow me to reverently apply Jesus' words to our *message* and our *church family* this morning? "*If you will lift up Jesus in your relationships and conversations, Jesus will draw all men to Himself.*" ...*pray*...