

John 1:35-51
Genesis 28
Psalm 105

“Come and See”

March 15, 2020

Jacob is on his way to Paddan-aram to find a wife.

And while he is on his way, he stops for the night at ‘a certain place,’
and in the night he dreams of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven,
“and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!”

And the LORD, the God of Abraham appeared, and promised the land
to Jacob’s descendants.
“and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

Jacob named that place *Bethel* – the house of God –
the gate of heaven.

The city of Bethel would have a mixed history.
It was an important place in the life of Jacob.
And when he returned to the land, he did indeed build an altar at Bethel.

Later, in the days of Joshua, Bethel was one of the first cities to be conquered,
and until the days of Samuel, it was one of the most important religious centers in Israel.

But then, after the division of the kingdom,
Jeroboam built a shrine with a golden calf at Bethel.
And from then on, Bethel was always associated with idolatry and rebellion.

You can understand why Jeroboam picked Bethel!
It was the great city of Jacob.
It was the House of God – the gate of heaven!

What do you do with that?
A ladder reaching from earth to heaven,
with the angels of God ascending and descending!
Where is Bethel?
Where is the House of God?

The House of God is Jesus.

Our Psalm of response is found in Psalm 105A –
as it retells the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob –
and their confidence in God throughout all the trials of life!

Sing Psalm 105
Read John 1:19-51

At a time when our gaze is fixed on a world crisis –
when our attention is focused on all the questions about how to avoid getting sick –
or at least, how to slow down the disease so as not to overwhelm the healthcare system,

John tells us to look at Jesus.

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Our shorter catechism rightly says
that the “fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.”
Sin and misery is our estate – our condition – our *inheritance*.

We have inherited a condition of sin and misery.
Notice that is a *singular* estate.
Sin and misery are not two different conditions.
We have a singular condition.
Our affliction is not *simply* that we are sinners.
We are *miserable* sinners!

In our misery we sin.
In our sin we are miserable.

But Jesus came as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
Or, as John says in verse 34,
“I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

He is the one who brings us *out* of the estate of sin and misery!
He is the Son who has inherited the kingdom of God –
and thus those who trust in him receive *righteousness* and *salvation*.

1. Behold, the Lamb of God – Day Two (v29-34)

Last time, I didn’t mention one of the key structural components that John uses.
Throughout his gospel, John will use feasts as the identifying marker for each story.
That will start in chapter 2, verse 13 – “the Passover of the Jews was at hand.”

We saw at the beginning of John’s gospel,
that John starts with the *beginning* – “In the beginning was the Word.”

And many have noticed that from John 1:19-2:11,
there is a span of seven days.

The first day is when John confesses that he is not the Christ.
The next day (day 2), verse 29, John identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God.
The next day (day 3), verse 35, John again identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God,

sending his disciples to follow Jesus.

The next day (day 4), verse 43, Jesus decided to go to Galilee.

And on the third day (day 7), chapter 2, verse 1, there was a wedding at Cana.

Genesis 1-2 tells of the creation of the world in six days,
and on the seventh day, God rested.

John 1-2 tells in six days of the coming of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,
and on the seventh day, came the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

John wants you to see Jesus.

“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”

Jesus is the atoning sacrifice – the lamb of God –
who offered himself for the sin of the world.

The sacrifice of Christ was a full and sufficient sacrifice for the sin of the world.

It is sufficient for all.

There is no other sacrifice needed for *anyone*.

But it only takes effect – it is only *efficient* – for those who believe!

That’s why John wants *you* to believe in Jesus!

And when I say “John” – I mean both John the Evangelist (the writer of the gospel),
and John the Baptist, the one who first identified Jesus as the Lamb of God!

John the Baptist understood his role.

John had been making disciples –
but he didn’t want his disciples to *follow him* –
he wanted them to *follow Jesus*.

Look at what happens in verse 35:

2. Behold, the Lamb of God – Day Three – the Calling of Andrew and Peter (v35-42)

a. They Followed Jesus (v35-37)

³⁵ *The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.*

If you are a disciple of John the Baptist

and John says, “That’s the one I’ve been telling you about!”
what do you do?

You follow Jesus.

In this case, literally!

b. “What Do You Seek?” (v38)

³⁸ *Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?”*

What do you seek?

What are you looking for?

I suspect that most of us are hoping that we never come down with this dreadful virus!

But what are you seeking?

If you are seeking to avoid a virus –

then you are likely going to miss the heart of what Jesus wants you to see.

In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus says it this way:

“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness!”

But here, Jesus simply asks, “What are you seeking?”

And they say, “Rabbi, where are you staying?”

In other words, “Teacher, can we stay with you?”

c. They Stayed with Him (v39)

³⁹ *He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ^[i]*

(in other words, about two hours before sundown).

What’s going on here?

They have believed John’s testimony that this is the Son of God.

So they want to be with Jesus.

Wherever he goes, they want to go with him.

And what is more:

d. “We Have Found the Messiah!” (v40-41)

⁴⁰ *One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus ^[k] was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ).*

They want to be with him – and they want others to be with him.

Notice first what Andrew says:

“We have found the Messiah!”

We have found the Anointed One – the Christ.

We have found the heir of David –

the one who will restore the Kingdom of God and make everything right.

And notice who he says it to:

his brother.

He starts with those nearest him and he says, “we have found the Messiah!”

Andrew doesn’t know very much yet –
so there’s not much more to say!

When it comes to bearing witness to Jesus,
you don’t have to know much!

You just have to tell those near you,

“We have found the Messiah” –

We have found the one who delivers us from sin and misery!

And then:

e. He Brought His Brother to Jesus (v42)

⁴² *He brought him to Jesus.*

Pastor Joel and Rev. Jeromin have said it well in recent weeks,
when they encouraged you simply to bring your friends to church –

or perhaps better, *to bring them to Jesus.*

That’s what we do here!

We bring people to Jesus.

That’s my goal in every sermon!

In every sermon, I want to bring you to Jesus!

And

*Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas”
(which means Peter^[1]).*

You shall be called Rock.

John says no more at this point –

but this foreshadows what will come later.

God often changes a man’s name in order to show what their calling will be.

Peter will have a special calling among the Twelve –

as he will be the one who preaches the good news at Pentecost to the Jews,

at Samaria to the Samaritans,

and at Cornelius’s house, to the Gentiles.

Peter had a unique role among the Twelve.

But there is nothing in Scripture that suggests that Peter's unique role was somehow transferred to the Bishop of Rome!

The next day brings us to Day Four.

3. Follow Me – Day Four – the Calling of Philip and Nathanael (v43-51)

a. “Follow Me” (v43)

⁴³ *The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.”*

Notice here that Jesus himself calls Philip directly.

John the Baptist had pointed Andrew to Jesus.

Andrew had brought Peter to Jesus.

Now Jesus himself calls Philip:

“Follow me.”

Philip was from the same town as Andrew and Peter – suggesting a strong Galilee connection.

And Philip found his friend Nathanael.

b. “We Have Found Him of Whom Moses and the Prophets Wrote!” (v44-45)

⁴⁴ *Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.* ⁴⁵ *Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”*

But Philip says it differently.

He doesn't say, “We found the Lamb of God” – or “the Son of God” – or “the Messiah.”

He says, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

Philip identifies Jesus as the one of whom Moses wrote in the Law.

Moses had spoken of a prophet like him who would arise.

And after Elijah and all the prophets –

it had become clear that Israel was still waiting for that day!

We have found him!

The one we have been waiting for!

And his name is Jesus of Nazareth – Joseph's son.

Nathanael is not at all certain of this!

c. “Come and See” (v46)

⁴⁶ *Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”*

Nazareth was a tiny town – little more than a village.
Nathanael’s surprise would have been justified.
There were no prophecies about Nazareth in the OT!
How could the Messiah come from such an obscure place?!

Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

I want you think about Philip’s response!
Philip doesn’t try to argue his friend into coming.
He doesn’t provide reasons why Nazareth is worthy of Messiah!
As far as we can tell, he may not have known
that Jesus was *really* born in Bethlehem!

He just says, “Come and see.”

Do we have that confidence in Jesus?
Jesus will call his people to himself.
Okay – so they’re not convinced by us.
That’s okay.
We don’t have to convince them!

We just have to bring them to Jesus.

“Come and see.”
Pastor Joel has been using this well at Heart City.
Come and see.
Not just “come and see our church.”
But come and see *Jesus*.

See Jesus in the preaching of the gospel.
See Jesus in the breaking of the bread.
See Jesus in the life of his people – as we walk together in the midst of this broken world.

d. “I Saw You” – Jesus Knows Us (v47-48)

⁴⁷ *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!”*

But then in verses 47-48, John turns the tables on us –
even as Jesus turned the tables on Nathanael!

Philip had said,
“Come and see!”

But when *Jesus saw Nathanael* coming toward him,
he said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit.”

Here is a straight shooter who says it like he sees it!

⁴⁸ *Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”*

Many have tried to figure out what this means.

I’ve heard all sorts of fascinating speculations.

I won’t repeat them, because they are exactly that – speculations!

Plainly, Nathanael recognized something remarkable here.

How did you see me under the fig tree?!

Because Jesus *knows* Nathanael.

And Jesus *knows you*.

He already knows your fears.

He already knows your sin – and your misery.

He knows what you have been through.

“I saw you.”

And I love you anyway!

“I saw you..”

And I want you to be near me.

After their sin,

Adam and Eve had sewed fig leaves together as a covering for their nakedness.

Now, Nathanael recognizes that Jesus has *seen him* under the fig tree,
and his own eyes are opened!

e. “You Will See Greater Things... the Angels of God Ascending and Descending (v49-51)

⁴⁹ *Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”*

Nathanael may not have realized the full import of what he was saying.

The “Son of God” in Jewish theology could simply be the Messiah –
the son of David – who was adopted as God’s son.

But John the Evangelist – our author –

realized what Nathanael’s confession really meant!

You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel.

You are Israel’s God who has come in the flesh!

And Jesus shows us this in his response:

⁵⁰ Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” ⁵¹ And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, ^[m] you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

Think back to Jacob – who had seen the vision of the angels of God ascending and descending on Jacob’s ladder – at Bethel.

What was the point of the ladder?

It’s not a ladder for *us* to climb!

The fact that angels are going up and down

shows that this ladder is the connecting point between earth and heaven.

This is the house of God – this is the gate of heaven!

Now Jesus says that *he himself* is Jacob’s ladder.

That night at Bethel, Jacob saw the place where earth and heaven met.

Now Jesus says that *he* is the place where earth and heaven meet.

He has been called the Son of God (which was a title of Messiah, the King).

Now identifies himself as the Son of Man (which in Daniel, was a divine figure!).

He is true God – he is true man.

And he is himself the gate of heaven – he is the way, the truth, and the life –
no one comes to the Father, except through him!

And so Jesus says to Nathanael

that *you will see* that I am Jacob’s ladder.

You will see heaven opened – and the angels of God ascending and descending on me.

At a time when so many are fearful and anxious –

Jesus says, “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest!”

Pour out your heart before him!

Come to him in faith – trusting that he will hear you!

Because he will not turn away the one who comes to him in faith!