

Nathanael Won For Jesus.

Text: John 1:43-51

Suggested Hymns:

47, 360, 164, 366, 851

1) Nathanael Comes To Jesus

2) Jesus Wins Nathanael

3) The Lesson For Us

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 1:43–51, ⁴³ *The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and 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 of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” ⁴⁶ And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”*

⁴⁷ *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” ⁴⁸ Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”*

⁴⁹ *Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” ⁵⁰ Jesus answered and said to 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, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

It is estimated that there are about two billion people today who, at least nominally, belong to the Christian Church. That is about a third of the world population.

It would be an interesting study to see how each of these people came to be members of the Church. Remember, however, there is only one means by which people are rescued out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, and that is by the Gospel of Christ, which alone is *the power of God to salvation.*¹

But the ways in which they are brought to Christ are various and marvellous. Like the penitent thief on the cross, many a criminal in his death cell has told an interesting story of a *“brand plucked from the fire.”*²

Some people have determined to read the Bible with the avowed purpose of refuting it, of discovering contradictions, and ripping it to pieces with their arguments, but in reading it they have been overpowered by its truth, overwhelmed by its beauty, overcome by the grace of God as revealed in Christ, and they have cried out, *“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”*³

Others came to the house of God from mere curiosity, or from courtesy to a friend who had invited them, or on the occasion of a funeral, but as the preacher revealed in simple words the way of salvation through the crucified Redeemer, they were brought to the saving knowledge of the truth. They came to curse, they left to bless.

Augustine went to hear Ambrose because he was an eloquent speaker, but little by little what Ambrose said drew him to Jesus.

Our text throws the spotlight on Nathanael. The name Nathanael means “gift of God.” He was indeed a gift of God to the early Church. We have before us the narrative of how he was brought to Jesus. Let us prayerfully consider this narrative and its lesson. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Nathanael Comes To Jesus

The winning of Philip is told in these simple words, *Jesus ... found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.”* In the sacred records Philip appears rather commonplace. His name is mentioned four times, but never for a word or achievement that would elicit the attention or acclaim of the public.

However, one thing distinguishes him: he was a soul winner. He realised that he was saved to serve. Philip had found his Lord. He was convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised, long-expected Messiah.

He now sought Nathanael, saying, ***“We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote.”*** But Nathanael counters with prejudice and disdain, ***“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”***

Philip might have argued with Nathanael. He might have called him unfair and unreasonable for condemning a man without a hearing. But ***“vinegar swarms no bees,”*** and ***“a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.”*** Philip’s brief but masterful reply was, ***“Come and see.”***

This is the right sort of preaching from the pulpit and in private conversation. As ambassadors of Christ we just need to stand with pointed finger, saying, ***“Behold the Lamb of God!⁴ Come and see.”***

The best we can do is to present our claim that Jesus is the Christ, and then let immortal souls experience the power of this truth as they come and see.

Philip’s short sermon is the best that any preacher or any layman could preach to doubting souls. The Psalmist writes, ***“Taste and see that the Lord is good.”⁵*** Nathanael came and saw and believed. Give Jesus a chance in your life, and He will convince you.

There is today much insidious scepticism in the world against the boundless blessings of God’s kingdom. There is a counter offensive against God, against Christ, and the Bible to hold back the Church in its effort to save the world. People still ask the question, ***“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”***

They do not believe that the Nazarene has power to save the world. There are people in every community who do not believe that any good can come to them from the churches, or from the preaching of the Gospel, or from public worship. These all need to ***“come and see”*** and to seek Jesus, whom to know is life eternal.

Philip’s invitation presented a great challenge to Nathanael. It placed the burden of responsibility upon Nathanael’s shoulders. It was a challenge that tested his honesty and sincerity. And he accepted the challenge. He found Jesus to be all that his friend had claimed and infinitely more. Jesus proves Himself by showing Himself to be a loving Saviour, Helper, and Friend.

“Come and see” — that is all God asks of a person. That is all the Church asks of a person. Come and see for yourself what the love of God in Christ

means to your soul. Come and see that Jesus gives you rest and joy, peace and power, just as He said.

The great sin of man is unbelief, refusal to heed the Gospel invitation, *“Come and see.”* We read in Revelation 22:17, ¹⁷ *“And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*

And in Matthew 11:28, ²⁸ *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd calling to the nations, and His sheep follow Him, for they know His voice.

He is the great Magnet, drawing all people to Himself. He is the sovereign Ruler of the Kingdom of Truth and *“Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”*⁶ His Gospel is the truth, and all people must give an account of their acceptance or refusal of it. *“What do you think about the Christ?”*⁷ *“Come and see.”*

2. Jesus Wins Nathanael

Nathanael may have been sceptical, but he kept an open mind and an open heart. And Jesus met that open heart to fill it with blessed assurance and peace without measure. If Philip answered Nathanael tactfully, Jesus did even more so. He warmly greeted this newly found disciple with the words, *“Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!”*

Jesus meant every word. He never indulged in flattery. Nathanael’s strength of character consisted in his sincerity. He was an honest-hearted man. Of course, he was not without sin, but he was open-minded. He was not suspicious and distrustful. He was honestly ready to listen to the truth. All he needed was the guiding hand of a friend like Philip.

It is good for us to note that Jesus was always ready to deal gently with the sinner. The neighbours in Jericho ostracised Zacchaeus, but Jesus entered his house and brought salvation. Family who others considered hopeless, Jesus befriended, and their lives were made beautiful under the touch of His love and grace.

The woman of Samaria⁸ was notorious for her crimson life and many love affairs, but Jesus spoke to her and won her for heaven, and she became one of

His true followers. How many days and nights of misery we could spare ourselves and others if we would always follow Jesus in His gentleness.

What do you look for in your neighbour? We nearly always find just that for which we are looking. Look for flaws, and you will not fail to find them so long as you look upon a fellow human being. Again, look for the commendable traits in your neighbour's life and character, and you will nearly always find them.

A person drove down the highway with a forester. He said, "I counted 14 dead trees between the last two towns." "Strange," I answered, "I saw none." They were each looking for those things which would interest them. And what you are looking for is usually a reflection of your own soul and personality.

But more important is what God sees in you and me. What are you in the sight of your Maker, who *"does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart?"*

Are you genuine and sincere in the profession of love for God? Is yours a religion of the heart, or only a formality? It is not at all important what people think of you, but all-important is what God thinks of you.

If you were weighed in the balance, would divine Omniscience say, *"Behold a true Christian, who is honest, sincere, and humble?"* Some day, just this weighing will come to pass. By the grace of God let us now keep that in mind.

Christian, be honest in everything. Never be deceitful. Never be untrue to yourself, or your fellows, or to God. Always have a pure motive behind your every look upon your neighbour. Search for the beautiful, and you will find it. Look for filth, and you will find it.

Nathanael was very much surprised that Jesus knew him, and much more surprised when Jesus told him that He saw him under the fig tree. We can imagine his utter amazement when Jesus revealed the very thoughts that had been in his mind.

Because Jesus saw into his inmost heart and told him what He saw, Nathanael believed and said, *"Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"* He knew that he was in the presence of One who could read the heart. By such a manifestation of omniscience he was convinced that Jesus is the Messiah.

And Jesus answered, ***“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, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”***

Nathanael had called Jesus, Son of God; Jesus calls Himself Son of Man. Son of God and Son of Man — the Messiah, the intermediary between heaven and earth like Jacob’s ladder, whose foot was on a barren mountain, but whose top was by the throne of God.

So the Saviour won Nathanael, the Shepherd found His sheep. This is still His great work, the conversion of souls. This is still the greatest miracle of all, souls won for Christ!

We wonder at the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, at one moment breathing out slaughter against the followers of Christ, the next moment crying, ***“Lord, what do You want me to do?”***¹⁰

We wonder at the conversion of Luther, one moment a bond servant in the superstition of trying to appease the wrath of God in climbing Pilate’s stairway, and the next moment entering the newness of life, as the truth grips him, ***“The just shall live by faith.”***¹¹

We wonder at the conversion of John Newton, one moment a pirate swinging in his hammock and the next moment a saint seeing a vision of Christ and expressing his faith in the words of his hymn: *Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me; I once was lost, but now am found; Was blind, but now I see.* Such conversions are occurring daily.

Have we found Jesus as he is offered to us in the Gospel? Do we believe in Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, as the Saviour and King of our lives? If we have found him in this way, we can do only what Nathanael did, namely, commit our lives to Him as His loyal and faithful subjects.

It is not enough to look upon Jesus merely as a good man, as a wise teacher, who was put to death for the truth He proclaimed. It is not enough to admire His character.

When we really find Christ and come to know Him as He is, He produces a change that is profound, complete, and permanent. Then we, too, will rejoice,

“Eureka, I have found.” Then from day to day He means more to us. The meaning of His Cross becomes plainer. The gift of His love becomes more precious.

The presence which He promised becomes real. And the desire of Andrew and Philip that others might find the Messiah as they had found Him becomes the fervent desire and burning passion of our lives. This is the lesson of our text for us. Let us think further upon it.

3. The Lesson For Us

The keynote of this whole lesson, yes, this chapter is ***“We have found!”*** Andrew says to Peter: *“We have found the Messiah.”*¹² Philip exclaims to Nathanael, *“We have found Him ... Jesus of Nazareth.”* And now Nathanael himself had found Jesus.

Does the happiness of your Christian faith re-echo in your life? Do others know that you have found the Christ, your Saviour? Do they hear about it?

Does our salvation really mean anything to us? Have we ever felt so happy over the forgiveness of our sins through the merits of our Redeemer, felt so happy over the immeasurable patience of God with our unbearable shortcomings and frailties that we felt like saying, *“The world will never hear the end of this?”*

This lesson again impresses upon us the importance of personal soul winning. There is no mass conversion here. It is one soul winning another. Philip’s largest service to his Master was in dealing with people face to face and heart to heart. His approach and invitation are direct.

And this type of preaching is possible for everyone of us. Not all of us can proclaim God’s message from the pulpit, but there is not one who cannot preach Jesus to the individual. This is a high and holy privilege that is within reach of the least, as well as of the greatest.

There is absolutely no doubt that Jesus Christ expects every follower of His to be a soul winner. It is a sad fact that a large part of the Church today leaves this supremely important task to the pastor and to a few faithful workers. But this is all wrong.

Preaching Jesus to the individual is the privilege of every Christian. Not only is this the privilege, but also the solemn responsibility of every follower of Christ. Because we can preach Christ, we ought to preach Christ.

And because we ought to preach Christ, we are remiss in our sacred duty if we fail to do so. ***“Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.”***¹³ That word befits the lips of every saint, just as much as it befits the lips of St. Paul.

There are those who say that they are willing to be useful, but find nothing to do. But to those who are willing, God will give daily opportunity. Again and again friends cross our path whom we might help if we burned with zeal for the salvation of souls. Try this service for Christ. Be daring for your Master and for your neighbour, whom you love. Invite him to sit down with you, and tell him the simple story of the Saviour.

You say that have you do not have the education? You have been in the greatest university in all the world, the school of God on Calvary. You have a storehouse of eternal truth. You have something that the world needs and wants. And rest assured God will open your lips if your heart is open to your neighbour.

You have what it takes if you are warm-hearted for Christ. And you have the message that can bring peace and happiness to people here and in the hereafter. Our Gospel is for the poor, and it is for the rich. It is for the down-and-out, and it is for the up-and-about. It is for all in between.

The Gospel is for all, ***“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”***¹⁴ If a man has any religion, he must either give it away or give it up, either share it or scrap it. And, the more you give, the more you have.

We must not fail our King. The Church cannot fail, but the people in the Church can fail. If the light grows dim, it is because the dynamo is down in the Church, its people, is weak. The world is looking to the Church today ... for light. We have it. You must not fail. There must be no blackout within the Church.

Then at the end of life's little day may some happy soul whisper a prayer of gratitude to the great Saviour of men and, while standing at the little mound that marks our resting place, be able to say, *“He led me to Jesus.”* Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Rom. 1:16

² Zechariah 3:2

³ Mark 9:24

⁴ John 1:36

⁵ Psalm 34:8

⁶ John 18:37

⁷ Matthew 22:42

⁸ John 4:1-26

⁹ 1 Samuel 16:7

¹⁰ Acts 9:6

¹¹ Romans 1:17

¹² John 1:41

¹³ 1 Corinthians 9:16

¹⁴ Romans 3:23