

“Discover Jesus for Yourself”

Salado UMC

Preaching Text: John 1:43-51

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

17 January 2021

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“The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance—it is the illusion of knowledge”

Daniel J. Boorstin (1914–2004).

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“Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought”

Albert Szent-Gyorgyi (1893–1986).

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Of the four Gospels, numerous church folk, by and large, seem to like John best.

John’s Gospel is the source of many of the church’s favorite Bible verses, for example:

“For God so loved the world”

“Let not your hearts be troubled”

“I am the resurrection and the life”

“A new commandment I give you”

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples”

“In the beginning was the word”

“I pray, Father, that the world may be one”

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”

Hear the day’s lesson, John 1:43-51:

[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 1:43-51).

Plainly, there is too much for us to mine from a lesson as rich as this one. So, in order to examine this story, I ask that we mainly focus on two phrases: "Come and see" and "Where did you get to know me?"

The first phrase occurs as Jesus comes to Galilee. Seeing Philip, Jesus invites him to "follow me." Philip then finds Nathanael and tells him that he located the long-awaited Messiah, promised by both the law and the prophets. The Messiah comes from Nazareth—Nazareth, is the Gospel's version of our Waxahachie. In other words, Nathanael's asks: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth (or Waxahachie)?"

Philip wisely declares: "Come and see." There are some things that people can only believe or know through experience. Too much of life is second hand experience. Perhaps, we rely for our opinions excessively on what others think and say.

When I was at SMU, a group would sit at the cafeteria and eat together each evening. Once the group played a long-running hoax on a Virginia pupil named Johnny Rogers. He badly wanted to fit in. He was likewise a particularly agreeable chap. One evening the group decided to praise some pretty bad food by saying it was pretty good. Another day the group decided to complain about the food even though that night it was very good. This little inside joke went on for months. Johnny simply went along with

the crowd every night—he never had a genuine or evaluative thought about the food other than what the others said.

Are we this way within our culture?

Do we let Social Media Influencers or the Kardashians tell us what is important?

Do you remember who, with respect to Jesus, first said to you: “Come and see?”

When Philip says “Come and see” to Nathanael, it is the equivalent of saying what the Psalmist sings: “O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him” (Psalm 34:8). There are just some things that are too important to take someone else’s word for—rather, we need our own experience and judgment.

The second phrase we are examining closely—after Nathanael takes a cheap shot at Nazareth—is his question to Jesus: “Where did you get to know me?” I suppose this means that each time we think about Jesus, or come and to see Jesus, we need to remember that Jesus himself has already met us—in one way or another. Jesus knows us because he can see that God is already either explicitly or implicitly at work in us. No person is so bad that God cannot be present in that human being; AND no person is so good that he or she does not need God’s lifelong presence to guide, nurture, encourage, and to teach.

We may not know who Jesus is in each and every life circumstance, but that never means that Jesus does not know us—whether we are sitting under a fig tree or sitting in anxiety somewhere else pondering our life. John’s Gospel tells it all. Jesus as “The Good

Shepherd” knows us as his sheep that may or may not hear his voice. “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father (John 10:14-18).” Those sheep who know Jesus’ voice are wise. They listen.

First of all, “Come and see” basically means we explore the wonder of God in Jesus for ourself. We don’t take anyone else’s word for it, but we rather “Come and see!”

Second, when Nathanael asks “Where did you get to know me?” it merely brings to mind that God through Jesus knows us—and knows us well—far before we come to any saving knowledge of faith in Jesus. In this particular circumstance, **“it is not important who you know—what is important is who knows you.”**

We began with a few of our favorite verses/sayings in John’s Gospel and we now end with this one: **“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now”** (John 16:12).

Amen.

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