

John 1.43-50

In this passage from John 1 we see Jesus calling his first disciples. John the Baptist has faded from view and now Jesus is centre stage. Beginning at verse 35 Jesus calls four men: Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathanael. All four encounter Jesus; all four come to faith in him. And so we are given a picture of what it means to come to faith in Christ.

I once heard a sermon in which the preacher described the religion generally and the Christian religion in particular in terms of the story of the blind men and the elephant. You know the story they are all feeling different parts of the elephant, one the trunk, another a tusk one a leg, the other a tail and they all describe it differently. The story is used to teach that reality may be viewed differently depending upon one's perspective, what seems an absolute truth may be relative.

But that is not how the Bible sees things.

The Bible defines being a Christian as being in a relationship with the living God.

The Bible defines living in Christ as living in the light of God's revelation of himself in Jesus Christ.

I have three headings from our passage which talk about what faith in Christ looks like. It begins with an **Invitation**, it pivots on **Revelation** and it has an important **Implication** in our lives.

## 1. Invitation

- a. 43: **The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Phillip he said to him: Follow me.”**
- b. This is the same see following verse 35 there is this exchange between Jesus and two of John’s disciples. He invites them to come with him. Verse 29: **So they went and saw where he was staying and spent that day with him.**
- c. the initiative is with Jesus. He makes the call; he issues the invitation. What a gracious invitation it is: Jesus is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. He commands the hosts of heaven; he holds the very universe as if in his hand; he has been from eternity. Yet does not command them. Jesus invites them along. Jesus invites them into a relationship with him.
- d. There is such a loving wisdom here. People come to faith in different ways; it takes time. These disciples do not immediately come to a complete picture of who Jesus is. They do not develop a complete theological structure. They go and spend time with Jesus. Philip goes for a walk with Jesus to Galilee. That is what Jesus did so often; he spent time with people. As the Gospel proceeds, we will see that the disciples have a great deal to learn about Jesus and his mission. They will struggle, they will doubt, they will not always understand, they will get it wrong. But they will hang in there and they will grow.
- e. their faith in Christ began with an invitation into relationship with Jesus an invitation which was received and accepted. Being a Christian is not about ticking all the right theological boxes. It is not about ticking all the right lifestyle boxes. It is about responding to Christ’s invitation to come to him, and invitation to relationship.
- f. Does your Christian faith have something of that quality of relationship?
- g. I want us all to hear that same gracious call afresh today: Come, come and see. Come into relationship with me. It does not mean that you have all the answers; you might have only vague idea about the Christian faith. It does not mean that you see everything clearly. I have been a Christian all my life; I gave my life to the Lord when I was 17. I studied theology. There is so much to learn; and it is so often in that relationship that I have been learning more about Jesus.
- h. The psalm say: taste and see that the Lord is good come, come and see.
- i. Faith in Christ begins with his Invitation.

## 2. Secondly faith pivots upon Revelation

- a. Revelation is a big word. It talks about something that is revealed, disclosed shown, made manifest. Just as God through Jesus invites us into relationship, so too God through Jesus reveals himself to us.
- b. Christianity is a revealed religion. This means that the Christian gospel, the Christian message is not something human beings thought up it has been revealed to us by God.
- c. We all have our own relationship with Christ which is unique and personal to us, yet my faith is not of my own constructing and nor is yours.
- d. Being a Christian is not about me reaching up to God it is about God showing himself to us. God did not leave us grasping around in the dark. God's revealing centers in Jesus; he is the centre point of God's disclosing of himself, God's revelation to the world. Everything points to him.
- e. In the passage we see quite ordinary disciples, ordinary folk like you and me. They know something about Jesus. They know this guy called Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Perhaps they all grew up together, we don't really know. But Jesus' humanity identity is well-established already.
- f. But what happens is that Christ makes known, he reveals who he is to them and in response they believe in him. Their faith revolves around relationship with him, and around what he has revealed about himself.
- g. Two disciples of John responded to Jesus' invitation verse 39 and went and spent the day with Jesus. As a result one of those disciples Andrew goes and finds his brother Simon (who becomes Peter) and tells him verse 41: **“ we have found the Messiah.”**
- h. Then Philip comes to faith in Christ:
  - i. Verse **44. Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.**
- i. Now that is a quite extraordinary conclusion to come to. For he is talking to Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. They went to high school together, they see him working out at the gym. Well maybe not, but you get what I mean. This is someone who is on the scene.
  - i. the “one Moses wrote about in the law” that refers to the first five books of the Bible;
  - ii. And then the prophets refer to the rest of the Old Testament Scriptures.
- j. They lived with the expectation that God would send a prophet like Moses only better. That God would send a Rescuer like he did at the time of the Exodus. They were expecting a king who will lead, only one who would be righteous and just, whose rule would not end. They were expecting a priest who would offer a perfect sacrifice for sin. they were expecting a Messiah they saw the promise of that Messiah emanating from the Scriptures that they had.

- k. And they come to faith that Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph is God's Messiah: the Messiah of their expectation,; the Messiah promised in the Scriptures. They have set aside their preconceived ideas about Jesus and have put their faith in him. A faith that pivots on what Christ has revealed about himself. Christian faith begins with relationship but it pivots on what God has revealed to us in the Scriptures.
- l. One of the things I love about the Church is the diversity of people in the Church. There is gravy on the tablecloth people to-ing and fro-ing, struggling with their faith sometimes and on fire at other times; some want to be loud others want to be quiet; we are a mix of people and that is what makes the Church rich.
- m. But we are not in darkness all feeling different parts of the elephant. We are all living in the light of Christ's revelation of himself to us. We all have our own journey, we journey at our own speed, and we all have our own passions and interests. And God loves it all.
- n. But Jesus is revealed to us as the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of the World; the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. There is one faith which we all share. And we need to check our grasp of Jesus, who we think he is, what he does, against what the Scriptures reveal about him.
- o. Faith pivots on revelation.

### 3. Implication

- a. We end with a case study
- b. 45 Philip goes and finds Nathanael, and Nathanael responds with some lighthearted skepticism: **Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"**
- c. Then this exchange between Jesus and Nathanael: vs. 47 when Jesus saw Nathanael approaching he said of him, **"Here is a true Israelite in whom there is nothing false."** Nathanael asks how Jesus knew him, they had never met before, and Jesus answered, verse 48 **I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."**
- d. Quite simply Jesus demonstrates his divine authority. He knows Nathaniel through and through. We might think of the story a little later of the woman at the well who encounters Jesus and she says of him to the other "he knows everything I have ever done." A little demonstration of Christ's god-ness; he knows human hearts, he knows us all through and through.
- e. Consider the source of information about Jesus Nathanael now has.
  - i. He has the witness of Philip, which related Jesus both to his own experience and to Scripture
  - ii. His own personal encounter with Jesus, something unique to himself. Something experiential
- f. And he comes to faith: **49 Rabbi, you are the son of God; you are the King of Israel."** You are the one we are awaiting. You are the Anointed one. You are Messiah. You are.
- g. Not everyone in John's gospel comes to saving faith. Many reject. Others ignore. Some respond.
- h. Nathanael has come to faith in Christ. He has moved from some skepticism to faith. He does not have the whole picture. He does not have all the answers. None of us do. But he has come to faith in Christ.
  - i. Faith in Christ means responding to his invitation; believing in him, that Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
- i. And this leads Jesus to make this powerful statement which ends the passage: **I tell you the truth, you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.**
- j. They put their faith in him, now Jesus reveals the fullness of what that means. This is the implication of faith in Jesus: **you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.**
- k. **You will see:** everything is wide open. We are not grasping around in the darkness.
- l. Heaven open; Jesus Christ centre stage. He is the one through whom God's plan for salvation would be brought to completion. In him the heavens are opened; in him the gulf between God and human beings is bridged. This is what it means to confess Christ and believe in him. This is the implication of the ministry of Jesus in the world and in your life.

- m. It means that God does not have to seem distant any more; heaven is open;
- n. It means that in Christ your life is set on a journey, in a direction which is taking you from this life into eternity. It means nothing is ever the same again.

Invitation; Revelation; Implication.

We are not grasping around in the darkness. We live in the light of Christ. Let us live that faith, accepting his gracious invitation, orienting ourselves around his revealing of himself; living in joy the full implication of our faith in Christ.