
My Sermon from Sunday January 17, 2021 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany ~

"Come And See"

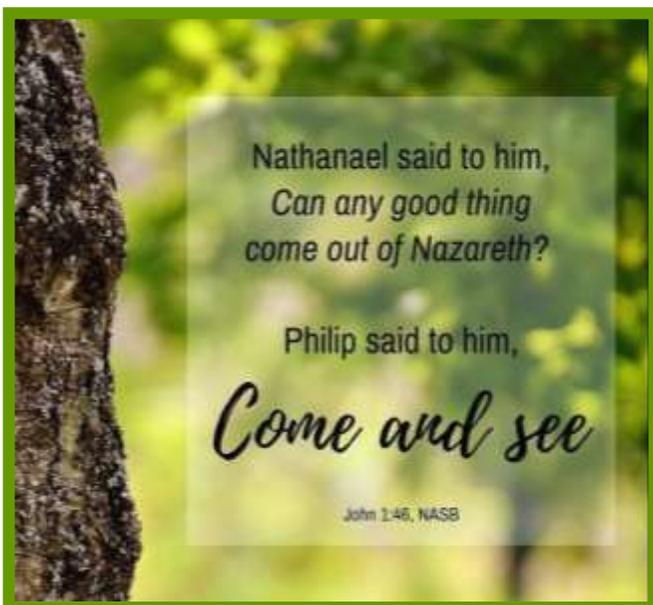
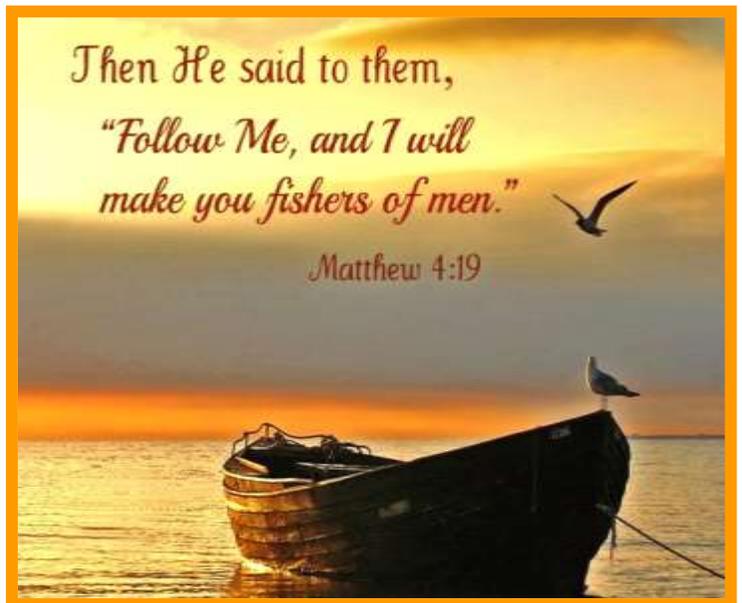
*O Lord, uphold me that I may uplift you and may the words of my mouth
and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.*

January is Annual Report time for the parish. Many people are busy writing their reports that will be included in our annual Vestry Book. We focus on whether or not we achieved our goals in 2020 and we develop new goals, new aspirations, and desired and hopeful outcomes for 2021.

My key Missional Objective for 2020 was to focus on the growth of **Discipleship**. When I wrote down that goal, I had no idea that we would soon be heading into a pandemic. In spite of a 9 month shutdown, with limited in-person worship and meetings, I believe that many parishioners deepened their discipleship and drew closer to Jesus. You prayed more and reflected upon your faith more and encouraged your family and friends to watch our live-streams and to be thankful people of faith.

Our gospel passage for this morning is all about discipleship and about Jesus calling his disciples. It is from the gospel of John. We are very familiar with the story of the call of the 4 fishermen ~ James, John, Peter and Andrew ~ by the shores of the Sea of Galilee when Jesus told them to follow him and he would make them fishers for people. At St. Paul's, one of our beautiful stained glass windows in the sanctuary shows the story of the calling of the fishermen.

John's Gospel has the 'call story' of 2 other disciples ~ Phillip and Nathanael. I have never seen a stained glass window of this story. So what happens?



We are told in the gospel that Jesus finds Philip and says to him, ***"Follow me."*** These words are similar to the call of James, John, Peter and Andrew. What does Philip do? He doesn't go off and ponder. Phillip immediately takes on the mantle of discipleship and spreads the good news about Jesus. He does what any good disciple must do. Tell others about Jesus and ask them to **Come and See**. Phillip finds Nathanael and tells him about Jesus:

*"We have found him about whom Moses in the law
and also the prophets wrote,
Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth."*

Nathanel scoffs at this information and retorts,
"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Phillip does not give up at this point. Instead, he encourages Nathanael to experience Jesus for himself. He tells Nathanael to ***“Come and See.”***

Jesus takes one look at Nathanael walking towards him and knows that Nathanael is a good person, that he is disciple material. They begin a conversation. Nathanael asks Jesus how Jesus can possibly know that he is a good person; ***“without deceit”*** is what the Bible says. Jesus says that he actually knows a lot about Nathanael, that he even knew that Nathanael was outside sitting under a fig tree when Phillip called him.

Nathanael is amazed by this information. It ties in with our psalm for this morning. In Psalm 139, we read that ***“the Lord has searched me and known me . . . Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.”***

What is Nathanael’s response? He lets go of his judgements about a ‘person from Nazareth’ and he makes a confession of faith: ***“You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel.”***

Jesus replies that Nathanael will see even greater things! ***“You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”*** John 1:51

Discipleship means that we all take on the mantle of responsibility to share the good news of our salvation. We all must invite others to **Come and See**. Encourage your family and friends to watch our live-streams, to subscribe to our parish e-news, to explore the Christian faith. I give every newly-married couple a Bible that I read from during their wedding service.

If someone passes immediate judgement on Christians, ***“Church is sooo boring”*** or ***“I don’t like people telling me what to do”*** or ***“They’re all hypocrites”*** . . . Invite them to **Come and See**.

I celebrate your call from God. I celebrate the hunger that God has planted in your heart to turn to God, and to listen to the voice of God. The little boy Samuel who would grow up to become a prophet of Israel heard God’s call in the middle of the night. I heard God’s call in my living room.

May we be like Phillip and call another person, even if the person is skeptical. May we be like Phillip and invite. May we be like Nathanael and have an open conversation about our doubts.

Here is what Billy Graham said about discipleship: ***“To be a disciple is to be committed to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and committed to following Him every day. To be a disciple is also to be disciplined in our bodies, minds, and souls.”***

One of my favourite Christians authors, Eugene Peterson, said this about discipleship: ***“It is a way of life we were created for.”*** And Dietrich Bonhoeffer was very clear: ***“Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”***

The invitation to **Come and See** is not just for clergy. It is for every one of us. We know the light of God, the love of God,



the support of God, that is available in a healthy faith

community. And I am blessed and privileged to call St. Paul's a group of disciples, committed to growing as loving disciples in Christ.

God is always looking for us and he rejoices when he finds us. He calls each of us and says:

"Follow Me."

We then invite others to **Come and See. Amen.**

Archdeacon Deborah+
