

“You Know Me?”

I Samuel 3:1-10; 1 Corinthians 1:19-31; John 1:43-51

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Perhaps you've seen this scene where a young child is sad, a little distraught because they think they have not been invited to a birthday party, thinking their friends are all going and they haven't been invited. Such a sad image. We have empathy for that child. Perhaps we have some empathy for that child because we still are interested in being invited, to be invited into the gatherings of our friends, to appreciate that time together. It certainly seems that at this time there is an invitation that a lot of people are looking for. I suppose there are a lot of people in this country who would jump at the opportunity of an invitation to the inauguration this week. There is one invitation to that inauguration this week that I think is special. The Tuskegee airmen, who were African-American airmen that were trained and fought in WWII and yet came home to the same discrimination that they had experienced before they left, this year are invited to be at the inauguration. This is a special invitation, recognizing what they've done and how they've served their country. We all, I think, in some ways want that invitation. As I read these scriptures today, I notice the offer, the invitation that's there. First, Jesus invites Philip to follow him. We don't know quite for sure, why Philip follows. He's from the same place as Peter and Andrew who we hear just before this, were following Jesus. And we do recognize that when he goes to talk to Nathaniel and invites him he says, "We've found the Messiah." And so, Philip, as he hears Jesus' invitation recognizes the coming of the Messiah, sees God at work in Jesus. So there's that wonderful invitation from Jesus to Philip to "follow me." And Philip follows.

What's incredible about this is not only is the invitation given to Philip, but then Philip is given that opportunity to extend that invitation to Nathaniel. We notice these invitations there's something special about them, not only that we can recognize that we are invited to follow Jesus, but I also see an invitation, an opportunity for us to serve as inviters. We're not only invited, we get to do the inviting. We get to do both just as we see Philip inviting Nathaniel. There are some interesting things about that invitation. When Philip goes to Nathaniel he simply presents the basics - "we found the Messiah; he's from Nazareth." Then he encounters Nathaniel's discrimination against Nazarenes, those folks from Nazareth, and responds simply. My feeling would have been to stop there and try and convince him - "We really found him; a really wonderful thing has come from Nazareth. God is really doing work here." But Philip doesn't do that. He doesn't try to make sure that Nathaniel knows everything he does before he invites him to come. Phillip actually says something very simple and probably, pretty wise. He says, "Come and see." Eugene Peterson translates it in *The Message* as "Come and see for yourself."

So often it seems hard to invite somebody perhaps to church, to experience some of what we have as a family of faith; part of that may be that we feel we have to convince them first. All that Philip does is say, "come and see." He's inviting Nathaniel to come and see the work of the living God in their lives, to see what Jesus is about, how God's love has entered into their lives and is with them, and how the Spirit is beginning to work through them. "Come and see," he says. It's an incredible invitation - to know the invitation and be able to invite another to the encounter with God in Jesus. This

description of the encounter is interesting, isn't it? As Nathaniel comes, Jesus greets him with "There's an Israelite with no guile, there is no deceit."

It's interesting. I went to the Martin Luther King breakfast yesterday and the speaker was talking about one of the things we can do when we look at one another is not only see - which is sometimes the easiest thing to see - the negatives, but try to see beyond. We're not only our negative aspect. So Jesus doesn't come and say "Oh, here's the guy that doesn't like Nazarenes." He says, "Here's the guy who's truthful, who's honest." He starts out with seeing him in a positive light, accepting him, inviting him to be part of the gathering there, to be his follower.

It interesting what Nathaniel notes. He recognizes that Jesus knows him. Knows, him better than he ever expected to be known. I don't know about you, but there aren't very few people I feel who know me in that way. I think most of us go through life wondering how well we're known completely. We may have some people we feel know us really well, but what is it like to be fully known. Sometimes it feels a little scary because to be known fully means not only my positives are known but my negatives. Sometimes I wonder if the worry about the invitation is simply that. Maybe they know me too well and they don't want to invite me because they know me.

Here it seems that Jesus knows Nathaniel fully, doesn't necessarily approve of all he is, but still invites him, still asks him to come to be part of the gathering of the children of God, to be a follower. Now he doesn't expect that as Nathaniel comes, that he'll remain the same person. Jesus a little surprised, in fact, (and I take a little comfort in this), that Nathaniel so simply turned, when some of the rest of us don't turn so quickly. Maybe Jesus was expecting that. But there's that gift that Jesus encourages and says, "as you're known, that's not all there is. You're going to see so much more. It's a wonder to be known and then you're going to get to see the wonder of who you will become and who the children of God can become and the wonder of what the Son of God does."

I think this is an incredible passage because it's full of the invitation of God offering us the opportunity for us to know the wonder and love of God's grace and to participate in that by inviting others, to come and see together and encounter the living, the love of God incarnate among us in Jesus, to see the spirit at work and to hear that promise that as we do that there's further to go. You'll see greater things. I think really it's like being the poinsettia whose color changes in the right amount of light. He's inviting us in to that kind of light that changes us, changes us into the very people he created us to be.

As the speaker yesterday pointed out, one of the basis reasons Martin Luther King could become the inspirational speaker that he was. was because he had a bedrock faith; he trusted in God. It was because he had followed Jesus and walked into that life that he was changed and became the person he was. I don't think that means we're all going to follow Jesus and become inspirational speakers but I do think it opens us up and begins to change us. Let us express the wonder of the unique person that God created each of us to be. There's a lot of incredible hope in this passage, in the invitation, the offer for us to be followers and the promise that we'll be changed and see the very nature of who God made us to be. Thank God for this passage and all it's hope. Amen.