

Worship At Home

14th January 2024

The prophet Isaiah writes in chapter 9:6-7
"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end. He will reign on David's
throne and over his kingdom, establishing and
upholding it with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever. The zeal of
the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."



Let us pray,

*Lord of Light, Prince of Peace, Almighty Counsellor,
Today I come to worship you and look to you to shine your light into my life.
Come Lord Jesus, by your Spirit. If you have a candle, find it and something to light it.
Put it somewhere you can see it. If you do not have a candle, use a lamp. As you light the
candle, or light the lamp, say these words: "the light shines in the darkness and the
darkness can never put it out".
Sit in silence and notice the light and the shadows in the room. When you are ready,
offer
this time of worship to God: Jesus, you are the light of the world, the light of my life,
I offer this time to you in worship and prayer and praise. Amen.*

[Prayer comes from Vine at Home,
14th January 2024]

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 713 Come, all who look to Christ today

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| <p>¹ Come, all who look to Christ today,
Stretch out your hands, enlarge your mind,
Together share his living way
Where all who humbly seek will find.</p> | CCLI5044394 |
| <p>² Come, all who will from every race;
Find here new powers of brotherhood,
Accept the Spirit's strong embrace
Which binds us to the common good.</p> | <p>⁴ Bring your traditions' richest store,
Your hymns and rites
and cherished creeds;
Explore our visions, pray for more,
Since God delights to meet fresh needs.</p> |
| <p>³ Come, young and old from every church,
Bring all your treasures of prayer,
Join the dynamic Spirit's search
To press beyond the truths we share.</p> | <p>⁵ Come, trust in Christ and live in peace,
Anticipate that final light
When strife and bigotry shall cease,
And faith be lost in praise and sight.</p> |

<https://youtu.be/LuVZs6uF9uM?si=LTewCJocwLqAlJcM>

Let us pray,

God of grace, in the days when your word was rarely heard and when visions were scarce,
you broke into Samuel's life and called his name...and he said, "Here I am, speak, for your
servant is listening" We confess that often so many voices clamour for our attention that
your word is again hard to hear.

Forgive us if you have called us to be prophetic witnesses or to use our gifts to serve you,
and we have not heard, or have been unwilling to respond.

Lord Jesus Christ, you met Philip and Nathanael on the road and said "Follow me" - and they did... We confess that we do not expect to meet you on the familiar roads we travel and so, we fail to discern your presence or your call on our lives.

Holy Spirit, you empower us to recognise and to respond to the invitation of Jesus to follow him, even when that means travelling on unknown and unfamiliar paths...

Merciful God, take from us all that hinders our hearing your voice and fill us anew with the Holy Spirit that we may joyfully respond to Jesus' call on our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn -CH4 97 O God, you search me CCLI5044394

- ¹**O God, you search me, and you know me,** All my thoughts lie open to your gaze
When I walk or lie down, you are before me 'Ever the maker and keeper of my days
- ²**You know my resting and my rising.** You discern my purpose from afar
And with love everlasting, you besiege me. In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are
- ³**Before a word is on my tongue, Lord.** You have known its meaning through and through
You are with me beyond my understanding. God of my present, my past and future, too
- ⁴**Although your Spirit is upon me.** Still, I search for shelter from your light
There is nowhere on Earth I can escape you. Even the darkness is radiant in your sight
- ⁵**For you created me and shaped me.** Gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you. Safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

https://youtu.be/mEGc3_D19Vo?si=dO1DSYUHJtUzFhHX

Reading: John 1: 35-51

Reflection: Come and See.

Right at the start of the story, John says: "Jesus found Philip". If you go to any book shop and look in the spirituality section, you will find autobiographies of people who have devoted themselves to the spiritual life through the years. And very often, they write about how they spent many years seeking out a spiritual leader to follow. They may have tried out the ideas of gurus, or philosophers, they may have sat at the feet of great preachers and wise teachers trying to decide who to follow. But that is not the same for us as Christians: that is not even an option because, as John says, "Jesus found Philip". Philip didn't find Christ. Christ found Philip.

The truth at the heart of the Christian story is not that you and I have found Christ, but Christ has found us. We did not decide for God. God decided for us. And the narrative that runs throughout the Bible is of a God who constantly seeks out his people.

So let us never think that we chose God: he has chosen us! And this is important because the knowledge that God has sought us out, rather than vice versa, is crucial in keeping us humble before God. Even our own faith is not our own decision!

Once Jesus finds Philip, he issues a single command: "Follow me". Put Jesus as number one in our lives: that is what is demanded of us as Christians. Philip is compelled to follow Jesus - and leaves all else behind: his work, his family, his possessions, his ambitions. It all has to go when we follow Christ.



Following Jesus is a radical commitment that demands every aspect of our being. Of course, we get it wrong from time to time and fall short of the ideal - but the intention of radical discipleship should always be before us. We notice what Philip did when he set out to follow Jesus, according to John, was find his brother Nathanael and tell him about Jesus! **The first rule of being a disciple of Jesus is very simple: Tell other people about Jesus!**

And what is so lovely, I think, is that Philip didn't have any great learning and yet he was really effective in being an evangelist for Jesus. I've just said how God finds us, not the other way round, but look what Philip says to Nathanael: "We have found him about whom Moses in the law wrote..." Well, Philip's theology isn't very good: Jesus found him, he didn't find Jesus! But, nevertheless, he is effective in bringing Nathanael to Jesus.

So often, we think we can't tell other people about Jesus because we don't know enough, or we don't know our Bibles well enough...but none of that matters. We don't need to be theologians to be effective. We just need to be passionate for Jesus, and he will do the rest! To be a follower of Jesus means keeping on going despite the knocks. Nathanael's response to Philip is not particularly encouraging, is it? "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip had come running over to Nathanael, passionate about sharing this good news about Jesus, only to be met with a really cynical response.

Sometimes, when we tell people about Jesus, we are met with cynicism or rudeness, or apathy and it can be really discouraging and it can knock our self-confidence. But when it happened to Philip, he didn't get into some theological debate about the merits of Nazareth as a geographical region or its place within the salvation history of Israel, or anything like that... He just said to Nathanael, "Come and see!" When it comes to it, we don't need to get involved in theological debates simply invite people to come and see!" - and let God do the rest.



But there is a rhetorical question for us to consider: if people do they find? Will people receive a warm welcome here? Will they get a sense of God changing lives? Will they have an experience of worship that gives them access to God? Will they go away with a sense of excitement that something is happening here?

Being a disciple means being found by God.

Being a disciple means telling others about him.

Being a disciple means not losing confidence when the message is not always welcomed.

Being a disciple means receiving peace and blessing from God.

"When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.'"

Jesus Christ had found Nathanael, just as he had found Philip, even though both Philip and Nathanael thought they had found Jesus. And there is a real sense of peace that we can derive from the knowledge that God has had his hand on us even from before we became aware of him. Jesus is perceiving in Nathanael the obedience of a well lived Jewish life. Nathanael has known the peace and blessing of God on his life.

And, as Christians, we know that peace and blessing can only derive from our relationship with Jesus. The more we allow Jesus to be the centre of our lives, the more we know peace in our hearts.

So, this is a seemingly very simple passage, a lovely story about the calling of Philip and Nathanael - but it is full to the brim with teaching on the nature of discipleship. We did not choose God he chose us and it is a lifetime's work for us to live out these two simple instructions: "Follow me!" and "Come and see!" Today, follow and then come - and we will see.

**+ COME
SEE**

The challenge in John 1:43-51 is to embrace the transformative power of encountering Jesus and to be open to God's work in the midst of doubt and uncertainty. As you reflect on this passage, may you be inspired to invite others to "come and see" the incredible journey of faith and the life-changing encounter with the Son of God.

Let us pray

We pray for integrity for those who lead us in faith. Let us pray to approach God with open hearts and wide imaginations. May God's presence fill our dreams with integrity. May we seek God with inner freedom. May nations discover authentic hope for their people. May we all work to provide housing, food, and education for the children of war.

Let us pray to listen closely for God's call. May we find in our sleep the vision to serve God and one another.

Let us pray for children who have lost imagination. May we energize our young to understand their path in life. May our youth know the depth of their skills, talents and their desire for a better life.

God, you look on us with eyes filled with love because you created us, each one unique, each with a special place and a particular purpose in the world. May we seek tirelessly to discover your will for us, to respond to your call, to take up that divine challenge which is ours alone. As we realise our purpose add our place in your creation, may we help others also to discover theirs. God, your will for all people is good, so help us to lift up those who have been trampled underfoot, those who have been forgotten, those despised by others, those left on the streets. Your will is that none of your children should be lost but that all be restored to newness of life. So, God, help us to do what it is you want us to do to complete that work until creation is restored and you are Lord of all. Amen.

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 251: Here am I, Lord

Here I am Lord I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin, My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them? Whom shall I send?

*Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord? I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me. I will hold Your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them, My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied. I will give My life to them, Whom shall I send?

*Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord? I have heard You calling in the night. I will go
Lord, if You lead me. I will hold Your people in my heart.*

CCL15044394

<https://youtu.be/ExxOkht8w7c?si=qcmcbIDb7Nkwfs1I>

People of God, hearing these words of encouragement from the Creator. Go about your daily routine, inspired to follow in the ways of the Christ. Be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. May your Spirit travel with me, so that we may come to know you more each day. And May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all evermore. Amen.

Thank you to those who have taken the time to contact me. Take care out there this week. May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and each day.
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If you choose to email me, please can you tell me who you are and where you live. Thank you.