

“Skeptics and No Faith Callings”

Message by DD Adams

2nd Sunday After the Epiphany

Providence Kemptown U.M. Church

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The gospel lesson is from John’s gospel, chapter 1, verses 43 through 51.

The next day Jesus wanted to go into Galilee, and he found Philip. Jesus said to him, “Follow me.” Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets: Jesus, Joseph’s son, from Nazareth.”

Nathanael responded, “Can anything from Nazareth be good?” Philip said, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, “Here is a genuine Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” Nathanael asked him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered, “Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree.”

Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are God’s Son. You are the king of Israel.” Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these! I assure you that you will see heaven open and God’s angels going up to heaven and down to earth on the Human One.” This is God’s word for God’s people. Please pray with me.

Lord God, *you are* the one who transforms doubtful skeptics like Nathaniel, because like Nathaniel, you know us all before we’re born. Nathaniel the skeptic,

who asked Philip, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Yet, Nathaniel followed and was led by Philip to “Come and see.” After meeting Jesus, he was convinced that Jesus was the “Son of God.”

This morning, move in the midst of someone’s no faith calling. Give ears to hear and hearts to believe that say, “Here I am Lord!” Let it be so God. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen. Peace be with you!

Samuel 3:7 points out that Samuel didn’t know the Lord. The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord calls out twice to him, but he runs to Eli the priest thinking it was him who was calling.

Most of us have struggled with the calling of God in our lives. We wonder, “Why would God call me?” “Who am I that God would speak to me?” And then we think, “Oh, I must have misunderstood.” It’s a question of discernment. We can miss the voice of God even when He’s speaking right to us.

Now, switching gears for a moment. Eli the priest played an important role in young Samuel’s life, but Eli was far from perfect. He made many mistakes raising his two sons. Scripture says they were scoundrels and had little regard for the Lord. Eli wasn’t the disciplinarian he should have been in training his sons for the priesthood, *but still*, God used him and he had purpose. We can see God’s hand at work preparing Samuel for an important leadership role in Israel.

Interestingly enough, young Samuel didn't know the voice of God. One might say, he had no faith. Eli had to tell him what to say to God when he realized it was God calling him. God calls us wherever we are, whatever we're doing, and wants us to become a person of faith to serve him. He doesn't ask us *first* to clean up our lives, he calls us right where we are; in the midst of life's messiness.

Samuel didn't know the Lord, and the word of the Lord hadn't been revealed to him. It's true, God calls ordinary people to serve him. People we might look at and think, "Why would God choose *that* person?" "Their life is a mess!" And yet, here we can see, God calls those who don't even know Him in a personal way yet.

And then we have the skeptic, Nathaniel in John's gospel. Philip went to Nathanael and said, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets: Jesus, Joseph's son, from Nazareth." Nathaniel replied to Philip saying, "Can *anything* from Nazareth be good?" Philip said, "Come and see."

Nathanael's first response is skeptical—like a disbeliever. He couldn't believe that the Messiah would come from Nazareth—a Galilean village—a small town where nothing great ever happened. Perhaps Nathaniel had a prejudice against the town. Maybe he'd been there and wasn't welcomed.

Philip invites Nathanael to "Come and see." When they found Jesus, Jesus called Nathaniel to him as if he knew him. Nathaniel questioned Jesus about how he had seen him sitting under a fig tree. Maybe, it was that very moment that Jesus

revealed to Nathaniel's heart and mind that *he was* God's Son, the king of Israel. *God is* one who transforms the hearts of skeptics and reveals himself to those who have no faith. God works miracles among us every day.

Tomorrow we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King said, "Human progress comes through the tireless efforts of (persons) willing to be co-workers with God." Co-workers *with* God and those who are willing to work with others.

There's no doubt, serving God comes with a cost, but we don't walk alone. The Christian life is not a self-contained solitary journey. Jesus walks with us and with others who walk with us. We make a commitment to serve.

Dr. Anthony Hunt, pastor of Epworth U.M. Chapel in Baltimore reprinted an article from the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary and says this about King's leadership.

Dr. King had *4 Key Principles of Prophetic Witness*. "King's 13-year ministry in the public sphere was ultimately rooted in a deep sense of God's call. And it was this sense of calling that ultimately spawned his action. King also had a deep sense of conviction [and] acted on his sense of calling within the broader context of his understanding of God and people. King believed that all persons were created by God with inherent worth."

King said we need courage to act on one's call and convictions meaning we're willing to risk much of our self, our popularity, promotion and associations.

King's commitment to do justice was derived from his sense of calling, conviction and courage. As we serve God this year, let's purpose to have these principles.

Please pray with me. God we thank you for calling your people into positions of leadership. We thank you for moving us toward a conviction that moves us to act. We thank you for that godly courage you inspire within us to serve and to lose our preoccupation with selfishness. Strengthen our need for desiring more of you in our heart and lives. Amen.