



Sunday Reflection

Season of Epiphany

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 17 January 2021

Epiphany 2

Today we see Jesus gathering his first five disciples. They come in response to either the call of Jesus to "follow me" or the invitation of someone they know to "come and see". Let us join together in wonder to worship God who reveals his Son to us, as Lord of all nations on earth.

Reflection for this week's Gospel

"Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'"

John 1:46

An Illustration to set the scene

"I've got two tickets for the Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition at the Natural History Museum – would you like to come with me?"

Tom is clearly excited about this exhibition but Martin isn't too keen.

"No thanks, I'm not really interested in photography."

Tom tries again: *"Okay but this is really special. There'll be some breathtaking shots of birds, fish, animals – all sorts of things – like you've never seen before. It's amazing."*



Something about the way Tom describes the exhibition, his enthusiasm and his wish to share the experience changes Martin's mind. He goes with Tom and is indeed fascinated, moved and totally caught up in the photographs he sees.

Martin would never have gone to that exhibition after reading a review of it in a newspaper. It was Tom's enthusiastic invitation that won him over and he was very glad it had. Martin goes to that exhibition every year now and often invites other friends to join him.

Looking at the teaching of the Gospel

We don't know much about Philip. Perhaps he was the other disciple of John the Baptist who spent time with Jesus the day before today's events. However they met, Jesus now calls Philip to "follow me" and Philip, like Andrew, rushes off to tell someone else. He tells Nathanael that "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth". Unfortunately, Nathanael doesn't want to believe that anything good can come out of Nazareth. He may well see Philip's excitement – it's bursting out of him – but Nazareth is a stumbling block, which Philip doesn't even try to mitigate. He just gives an open invitation for Nathanael to "come and see" for himself and Nathanael, perhaps grudgingly, follows Philip.

Jesus engages in a conversation to lead Nathanael to a deeper understanding of who he is other than a native of Nazareth. He lets Nathanael know that he knew him to be an honest man of Israel, having seen him sitting under a fig tree before Philip called him.

It seems a big leap for Nathanael to go from scepticism to a declaration that Jesus is “the Son of God... the King of Israel”, but perhaps Nathanael instinctively trusts Jesus and forgets about Nazareth. Jesus seems amused by this leap of faith and assures Nathanael that he will see “greater things than these”, surely an invitation to Nathanael to follow Jesus and see for himself angels of God “ascending and descending upon the Son of Man”.

That image of the angels was seen in Jacob’s dream many years before. When he awoke from that dream he named the place where he’d slept “Beth-el”, which means “house of God”.

This meeting with Nathanael ends with an extraordinary suggestion that from now on the house of God, the gateway of heaven, is to be found in Jesus, a living being, not a stone monument or building.

How can we reflect on the application to our lives?

Like Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip and Nathanael, we are called or invited to follow Jesus. That has almost certainly happened in different ways because God reaches us where we are.

In the deepest places of our hearts we may hear God say “Follow me” or a friend may say to us “come and see”,but sometimes it may take longer to bring someone gently to a place of acceptance and welcome where he or she can themselves invite Jesus more deeply into their life.

We are called to tell others of Jesus and to invite them to “come and see”, and that invitation need not necessarily be to a church building or formal service. Some people may feel more comfortable joining services or groups in the “virtual” world where, particularly during this last year, churches have been finding different ways of worshipping and sharing faith when church buildings have been closed and people have been isolated by illness, fear and loneliness.

Perhaps today’s Gospel reading also invites us to think about how we communicate our faith to others. Let us pray that through God’s Holy Spirit others will see in us enough excitement, enthusiasm, joy and love to encourage them to come with us – to come and see and to meet Jesus for themselves.

“Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’”

John 1:46

Please share your response to this reflection to Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God’ spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

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