

Come and See
Andrew Kneeland, January 17, 2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are going to talk about vision today, and I've got to tell you... it was very hard to avoid a 20-20 vision pun. Some joke about how hindsight really is 20-20.

But I'll refrain. You're welcome. The title of the message is "Come and See," and we're going to look at those verses from John 1 that we just read. John 1:43-51, if you have your Bibles with you, or if you want to turn in your bulletins.

We're going to divide this into three sections today and look at "What Philip Sees," then "What Jesus Sees," and then at the end "What We Can See."

So let's pray as we begin: *Father God, we thank you for your Word to us this morning. Bless us and give us wisdom as we dive into your word and your truth today. Help us to see you, Jesus, and learn more about your grace. In your name we pray, amen.*

This is the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry here in John 1. He is calling his disciples, those twelve men who would help him spread the Gospel through all the world. And here he calls Philip. Jesus says: "Come, follow me."

What did Philip see? Well, Philip saw a promise being kept. He saw the fulfillment of a prophecy. He looked at Jesus and he saw the person he had been waiting for.

From the very first pages of Scripture God had given His people promises. When Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden of Eden God promised that someone someday would "crush the head of the serpent." Remember that? Or remember when God promised Abraham that "one of His descendants would bless all the nations of the world"? Or when God promised King David that one of HIS descendants would sit on the throne forever?

Philip remembered. He knew all about these promises and he was like every other Jew... anxiously waiting for this promise to be kept.

The Jews were waiting for a Messiah, but most of them expected their Messiah to be a *political* Messiah. They were caught in a seemingly endless cycle of captivity and oppression, and they were desperately waiting for Someone to come and break them free. To re-establish Israel as a

free and righteous nation, not a nation enslaved by another. Not a nation of backwater fishermen and humble craftsmen, but a nation known worldwide for its wealth and its might.

The Jews were waiting for a political Messiah, but Philip saw something different in Jesus. He didn't see a *political* Savior, he saw a *personal* Savior. Jesus was a blue-collar homeless carpenter; he wasn't about to lead any nationwide political rebellion. But that didn't matter to Philip, because God's promises weren't about politics. They weren't about earthly freedom... they were about eternal freedom. Philip saw in Jesus an answer to prayer.

And what is the first thing Philip does? He finds his friend, Nathanael. You know that feeling you get when you just finish watching a great movie, or when you discover a new favorite TV show? When that happens to me, I've got to tell someone about it. I've got to find someone to recommend it to so they can enjoy it too! Or maybe when you find a good deal or a good sale going on... you can't just keep it to yourself! You want someone else to know about it, too! Philip is overjoyed that he's seen the Messiah and he's got to tell someone about it!

He tells Nathanael: "We have found Jesus!" And Nathanael responds with skepticism. Look at verse 46. He says: "Nazareth! Can anything good come from Nazareth?" He knows all about Nazareth, and how it's just a small town up north, nothing fancy. Certainly not a place where a king would come from... and Nathanael couldn't think of any prophecy about the promised Messiah coming from Nazareth.

But here's what's important: Philip's response. He doesn't argue with Nathanael. He doesn't sit him down and try to explain exactly how this could be possible. Or reason with Nathanael... trying to negotiate or bargain with him in order to get him to believe in this Jesus fellow.

Philip just says: "Come and see for yourself." There is no other way to do evangelism. We can't argue someone into faith in Christ. We can't convince them to become a Christian. Christianity isn't just intellectual. All we are to do -- all we CAN do -- is show them to Jesus, and let Him and the Holy Spirit do the rest.

"Faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ." "Nobody can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me."

Philip saw Jesus, and then he told Nathanael, "Come and see for yourself." Because this Jesus

fellow is worth seeing. And faith comes from Jesus.

Then in verse 47 we learn about **What Jesus Sees**. And this is fascinating, listen to this again. Nathanael is walking towards Jesus, and while he's still approaching... Jesus calls out to him: "Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity."

Nathanael is pretty shocked by this, he's never met Jesus... and he says, probably suspiciously: "How do you know about me?" Then look at verse 48: "Jesus replied: I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you."

That's crazy, isn't it? Jesus saw Nathanael before Nathanael even saw Jesus. Jesus KNEW Nathanael before Nathanael even knew about Jesus. And what did Jesus see in Nathanael? "A genuine son of Israel." An "Israelite indeed," another translation says.

Jesus isn't talking about ethnicity here. He's not talking about Nathanael's Jewish heritage. The Bible says that "real children of Abraham -- real Israelites -- are those who put their faith in God." This is another way of saying that Nathanael is a true believer, he has true faith, he's a true child of God.

Now, this is interesting. Because Jesus says this about Nathanael BEFORE he reveals his omniscience, BEFORE the "sign" he gave Nathanael about how He knew what he was doing. Look at the order of events here, because this is important:

Verse 45: Philip tells Nathanael about Jesus. Verse 46: Nathanael is skeptical. Verse 47: Jesus identifies Nathanael's faith. Verse 48: Jesus shows his divinity. And finally in verse 49: Nathanael confesses his faith.

But apparently Nathanael had faith even before his confession in verse 49. Even before he said: "You are the Son of God - the King of Israel" ... Nathanael was a believer. This is because a verbal confession doesn't create faith... being SEEN by Jesus creates faith.

Does that make sense? YOU don't create your faith, God did. YOU aren't responsible for strengthening your faith, God is. It's not YOUR job to maintain and preserve and grow your faith... God does that. God's Word does that.

Isn't that encouraging? That means that when we go through times of trial... where it's really hard to believe in God. Or it's really hard to trust that He knows best, that He knows what He's

doing... there's a lot of that going around, isn't there? ... we can know that our faith is created and grown by God. What a relief.

What does Jesus see when He looks at you? He sees all of your faults and all of your failings. All your sin and all your secret shame. He sees it all. But do you know what He sees before any of that? A baptized child of God. A "genuine son or daughter of Israel."

And not because you did anything special. But because God did something special for you.

And then finally look at the last few verses of this passage here. Nathanael is amazed and confesses Jesus as the Son of God and the King of Israel. Then listen to what Jesus says in verse 50:

Jesus asked him, "Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." Then he said, "I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth."

This leads us to our final point today, **What We Can See**. We looked at what Philip saw... he saw a promise from God being kept, a prophecy being fulfilled in Jesus. We looked at what Jesus saw... he saw in Nathanael a "true Israelite," he saw faith in Nathanael's heart.

And now in John 1 here Jesus begins speaking to everyone. Telling us all what WE can see, when we look to Jesus.

Do you remember the story about Jacob's Ladder? In Genesis 28, Jacob has a dream about a ladder. A ladder that's set up on the earth and reaches up to heaven, and Jacob sees angels of God ascending and descending on this ladder. While he's marveling at that sight, God speaks to Jacob and says: "Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth. And in you and your descendent (singular -- *descendent*) shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

So Jesus is saying: "Remember that story about Jacob's ladder? That's what YOU can see when your eyes are turned to me. I'm that descendent, who will bless all the families of the earth. I AM the ladder. I am the connection, the bridge, between heaven and earth."

But what's interesting about this ladder is that it isn't a ladder for US to climb. This ladder-to-heaven isn't something that we have to climb up in order to be saved, in order to reach

heaven and receive eternal life. This ladder -- the true Jacob's Ladder -- is Jesus, who came DOWN. Jesus came down in order to bring us back up with him. HE'S done the work. HE's the stairway.

Salvation isn't achieved by doing certain things or avoiding certain other things. Salvation isn't found by cleansing your heart and soul from sin or impurity. Salvation is not a ladder you climb. Salvation is in Christ.

Nathanael was amazed that Jesus had seen him while he was under the fig tree. But that was nothing compared to what Nathanael, all the other disciples, and us today, can see in Christ.

Jesus said: "You will see greater things than this." An open heaven. Access to God and access to the free and full forgiveness of all of our sins. Brought to us by Jesus, who came down from heaven to stand in our place before the judgment throne of God, receive on his shoulders the entire sentence of our guilty verdicts, and endure the full weight of God's fierce and holy anger against sin. He endured it for us.

Come and see. Jesus is the one we've been waiting for. He's the one who creates and sustains our faith. And he's the one whom we praise.

Amen.