

## **The Gospel of John - #9 - 11/29/2020 - "Finders Keepers!" John 1: 43-51**

**Introduction: IL-PIC-** Josua Hutagalung, a coffin maker from Indonesia, was working in his shop behind his house two weeks ago when a meteorite about the size of a football crashed through the roof. Word got out and soon he was offered 1.85 million dollars for the piece of rock from outer space! Talk about "finders keepers"! In today's text we are going to study about a spiritual "finding" of far greater eternal value as Jesus draws the hearts of men to Himself and they begin following the Savior as His devoted disciples! We'll also learn how valuable our witness is for Jesus to those around us who need Him to save their souls!

Sharing our faith is easier than we often imagine! **PIC-** outline of message.

**The Seekers and the Sought- verses 43-45** Looking back at verses 35-42 we meet with Andrew and Peter who, along with at least one other man, John (the Apostle), become the first disciples of our Lord in this Gospel account. On this second day of Jesus being presented to the crowds by John the Baptist ('Behold the Lamb of God!'), we participate, through the inspired text of Scripture, in the call of two more men to follow the Lord- Philip and Nathanael.

**Jesus seeks Philip-** We come upon a significant phrase in verse 43- "The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee..." There was a decision made to intentionally go to Galilee and it is clear as to the reason why- Jesus wanted to speak to and invite Philip to join Him in His earthly ministry! This was no rash decision to get up and head to Galilee just to "see what is going on" there. It was no accidental bumping into Philip once Jesus came to town. This reminds me of John 4 when the text says, "He had to pass through Samaria" and there He met a woman who put her faith in Jesus and was used by God to impact her entire village for Christ! Jesus had already chosen Philip in His Master plan and now the time was right to extend the offer to Philip. Philip's name, in Greek, means "lover of horses" and Philip was from the same town as Andrew and Peter- Bethsaida, which means "House of fishermen". We know from the four Gospels that most of Jesus' disciples had been fishermen by trade, but when they joined the ranks of committed disciples, they left their nets and followed Jesus. These men were not scholars who could advise Jesus on any number of issues, nor wealthy investors who could bankroll Jesus' ministry with a monthly check or cash. God chooses and uses those who love Him and want to actively promote His teachings and demonstrate His love to those around us- and so it was back then! 1 Corinthians 1: 27 and 28 says- "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are so that no being might boast in the presence of God." So, Jesus chose to pursue a lover of horses to show love to lost people! Philip becomes an important student of the Savior, as noted by the fact that he is mentioned once each in Matthew, Mark, and Luke and 12 times in John! But that is not the end of the record of his life and ministry. He became one of the Jerusalem church's first deacons or servants of the people as we discover in Acts 6. In Acts 8, God divinely led him to travel to the desert in Gaza to meet an Ethiopian man and lead him to faith in Jesus and to be baptized as a demonstration of his faith before going back to his job as treasurer of his

country. And in Acts 21 we see Philip and his daughters showing hospitality to the Apostle Paul and his companions who came to Caesarea. There we learn that Philip was an 'evangelist' at that time, and he had four daughters who all had the gift of prophesying, even while Paul was in their home! Jesus clearly knew what He was doing inviting Philip to join Him, but more specifically He knew what He was going to involve Philip in with regard to ministry that day in Galilee and for the rest of his life as a devoted disciple. Jesus is never surprised about what goes on in the heart and mind of those He calls to be His and to serve Him! Philip's evangelistic spirit was evident right away that day as he "found" Nathanael, just like the Lord "found" him!

**Philip seeks Nathanael-** The name Nathanael means "Given by God" and we meet this disciple-to-be six times in John's Gospel, nowhere else in the other Gospel accounts by that name. Most expositors believe that Nathanael is a "first name" for this man and that his family name is "Bartholomew". That name was given to a man who becomes a disciple of Jesus according to the first three Gospels and, according to Acts 1: 13- "And when they had entered, they went up to the Upper Room where they were staying- Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew..." The three letters, B-A-R mean "son of" like Barnabas- son of encouragement or Simon BarJona- son of John. Just like Genesis 6: 8 where Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, so Nathanael found grace upon meeting and speaking with Jesus, and like Philip did who found Nathanael! Philip must have known that Nathanael was a student of the Old Testament because he assures his friend that he and the other disciples had found Jesus to be the One who Moses and the prophets wrote- "Jesus of Nazareth"- the very town where Jesus grew up and where he worked in his father's carpenter shop until the age of 30 when He was powerfully presented to the people of His day through baptism by John and through the Father's voice from Heaven- "This IS My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." I believe Philip was prepared to open the Scriptures for Nathanael if need be or to at least quote a passage or two or three if Nathanael asked for proof of what the Old Testament said about Jesus. Nathanael DID have an important question, stemming from his own study of Scripture.

**The Investigation and the Interest- verses 46-48(a)** The question directed to Philip was this: "Can anything good (significant) come out of Nazareth?" It helps to know that Nazareth is not even mentioned in the Old Testament! It was a small town, about the same size as Garden City, Utah (and yes, good things have come and can come out of Garden City- as well as Nazareth!) SomeONE, the most important SomeONE came out of that small town in Galilee! There were some obvious prejudices that folks around Galilee had about Nazareth, much like prejudices some Northerners have toward people who hail from "down south" or from the hill country. Still more prejudices are displayed among people who are academics toward those who seem to be poorly educated or home-schooled. Prejudice is part and parcel of our sinful nature and only God can change our hearts to love all people! Philip gives Nathanael a simple but simply profound answer to his honest question...

**‘Come and see!’**- Another way to put that three-word response is: "Check Him out for yourself!" There is a wonderful lesson in that answer for you and me today if we want to know the best ways to share the Gospel, the Good News that Jesus saved. The best thing we can do when someone who is unsaved begins asking deep question- whether honest and heartfelt or simply as a way to start an argument, is to tell that person who Jesus is and what He means to you and me! No long arguments over doctrinal divergence or religious practices- just tell them all you can about the One who said, "I am meek and lowly of heart- come to Me!" You see, arguments often do more harm than good, and not many people have ever been argued into becoming a true believer. But if I am going to work on this simple, "tell them about Jesus" approach, I need to know Jesus well, and that comes from extended times in the Word and studies about Jesus from the four Gospels. Being able to explain who Jesus is, like the opening verses of John detail, and being able to share the who, what, when, where and why of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, will do far more, coupled with much prayer, to draw someone into the family of faith than any long or especially heated arguments could possibly do! When Jesus speaks of Nathanael He, in complete honesty, shares that He knows Nathanael and his heart for God well. He speaks of him as a true Israelite whose life does not harbor or cover up deceit. The word "guile" in this text is the word for baiting a hook to catch a fish. It is often compared in ancient accounts of wearing a mask as well! Nathanael was not trying to bait Philip into saying something false or misleading. Nathanael was not wearing a mask to hide his true intentions when he asked Philip if anyone of importance could come from Nazareth and, as the perfect, sinless Lamb of God, Jesus wasn't being deceitful when he described Nathanael's true nature as a devout Jew. The expression Jesus used did cause Nathanael to honestly ask one more critical question...

**‘How do you know me?’**- Nathanael is sensing that this Jesus in front of him is more than a good Teacher or a fellow devout Jew or a studious rabbi who is looking for students. Jesus made it abundantly clear that He is not a mere man but God in the flesh. He SAW Nathanael some distance away under a fig tree and knew then that Nathanael had a soft heart and an open mind and not only could be but would be one of His disciples. The fig tree was a common metaphor for Jewish people of a place for meditation and personal study of the Old Testament. Nathanael may not have made the connections from his study under the fig tree, but he came to realize who Jesus really is, and it changed the trajectory of his life forever. He became one of "the twelve" and served in the early church. Early church writings and tradition tell us that "Bartholomew" served as a missionary to India and it was while in that country that he was executed for his faith. So, what does all of this have to do with 2020 and you and me?

**The Explanations and the Experience- verses 48(b)-51** First of all, we can get a handle on who Jesus really is to us too- He IS the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity and He is the Son of Man, God in the flesh who lived among us, and gave His life for us at Calvary, then rose again!

**Son of God-** This account reveals Jesus as God who knows everything- who He calls to Himself, what we are like before faith and how He changes us when we put our faith in Him. He

is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises about Messiah and about carrying our sin on Himself on the Cross (Isaiah 53). He knows that we are sinners before we come to Him in repentance and faith and receive His free gift of eternal life. He also knows how He wants to use you and me to spread His message around to the unsaved people who need it- who need His grace and to do so in a loving, kind, passionate way and not argumentatively or to make a point and walk away feeling good about ourselves!

**Son of man-** Jesus is also the Son of Man- He came to identify with us, not send angels to tell the old, old story. He personally endured rejection, abuse of all kinds, and death of the crucifixion kind all for you and me. He told Nathanael that he would see far greater things than to simply know that Jesus saw him under that fig tree. He would see the heavens opened and angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man! Notice that "ascending" comes first- already on earth and going back to heaven when their tasks on earth are through! What is the connection to Genesis 28 and Jacob dreaming a dream and seeing into Heaven and seeing angels going up and down a ladder to Heaven? Well, that dream was a picture, centuries in advance, of Jesus as the ladder, the only WAY to God for men of earth. But Jesus is also speaking here, not of Jacob's ladder, but of Jesus, His work completed, ascending back to the Father and the angels announcing His ascension just like angels announced His coming to earth as the Baby of Bethlehem. In Acts 1, starting at verse 8, the Resurrected Jesus told those in the Upper Room- "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be witnesses for Me both in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. And right after saying this, as the disciples looked on, He was lifted up and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into Heaven as He went, behold two men stood by them in white robes, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into Heaven? This same Jesus who was taken up from you into Heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into Heaven!'" The angels will ascend and descend as will Jesus on that glorious day when all God's children will be caught away to Heaven to be with the Lord forever!

**Conclusion: IL-** Elizabeth Elliott- "It is through the tender austerity of our troubles that the Son of Man comes knocking. In every event He seeks an entrance into my heart. Yes, even in my most helpless, futile, fruitless moments. The very cracks and empty crannies of my life, my perplexities and hurts and botched up jobs, He wants to fill with Himself, His joy, His life. He urges me to learn of Him!

Learn of Him- tell others about Him!

Communion Worship

Song: "Wonderful, Merciful Savior"