



WEEK 4 – BECOME

CHECK-IN

How are you? Where have you seen God working in your life in the last week? And... today's scripture is about Phillip telling Nathanael that he has to come and see something really cool. (Spoiler: it's Jesus.) What was the last thing that someone told you you had to go check out? Was it a new restaurant or a movie? Maybe a new store or event? How'd it turn out? Was it aces, or are you now banning that friend from recommendation privileges?

OPENING PRAYER

God of Hope, help us to see through the mess around us, and to embrace the hope of your Kingdom come.

INTRODUCTION

Today, we wrap up three months worth of conversation on what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Waaay back in June, when the Cardinals season held so much promise, we began

discussing the characteristics of a disciple, and landing on three things that, if you take seriously, will give you a pretty good road map of what it means to follow Christ. (Pop quiz, who remembers all three?) Then, for the last month, we've been addressing four major roadblocks that prevent us from fully committing to that call. We learned what it takes to be a disciple, now, we have to answer the question... who will we be? We've covered three of the four hurdles. Today, we close with one that might be the greatest motivator for living into this role God has asked us to play. But first...

Review Question: Last week, we addressed the question, "am I enough?" And we answered it with a resounding, "yes... and not just that, you are more than enough... you are beloved." How have you embodied that this week? Did you own those words or are you still struggling with seeing the worth within yourself? Discuss!

SETUP

To this point, we've covered three "BE", answering three questions that prevent us from fully following Christ. Week 1, we asked ourselves, "Can I trust God?" A Scripture from Deuteronomy reminded us that we have a *personal* God who has gone ahead of us to fight our battles. Which gave us our first "BE" ...

BELIEVE

Believe that The Almighty Creator of the Universe is going ahead of you to personally fight for you and will never fail.

Then, two weeks ago, we looked at another hurdle in our faith, “are we in this alone?” One of the most disheartening hurdles to our faith comes when we think we are in this fight alone. Therefore, God gave us a community of faith where we can...

BELONG

We have a group of individuals who love us, support us, and walk with us through our struggles. Then last week, we looked at one of the most difficult issues facing people today, “am I enough?” We want to know we have worth. And an investigation of our very Creation showed us that we we are more than enough... we are...

BELOVED

Today, we’ll close three months worth of conversation with one more roadblock to our faith, a question that is as poignant now as it ever has been. See, it can feel like the world is going to hell in a handbasket. It feels like we’re more divided than we ever have been. It feels like there’s more hate and hurt and sadness than ever before. It feels like the problems are too big, the opposition too strong, the conflict too overwhelming. And so, it’s easy to fall into a defeated mindset, and struggle with this question...

IS THERE HOPE?

Last week, we talked about how hard it is to follow Christ when we feel *valueless*. Maybe just as difficult is following Christ when we feel *hopeless*. We’re often left asking... what’s the use? What’s the point of trying? Well, there *is* a point in trying,

and we'll look at a Scripture that gives us the reason why.

Question 1: What stands in the way of your hope? Where do you find it difficult to imagine something better or to keep the faith that there's more to this life than the mess we see around us? (Please keep in mind that for many, the things that hurt their hope is the exact thing that someone is placing their hope in. Hold space for tolerance and grace in differing viewpoints.)

SCRIPTURE

To get at the Biblical answer to this question, we'll look at a story where a couple guys were asking this very question, "is there hope?" We've spent a lot of time in John's version of Jesus's life, (so, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.) But for this story, we go back to the beginning, chapter 1 of John. There's a brief intro, then, the first thing he talks about is how Jesus found his first disciples. The way John tells it, Jesus is walking along, and he passes by John the Baptist, to which John the Baptist says, "behold the lamb of God." Knowing what this means, a couple of John's followers start following Jesus. They ask him where he's staying, and Jesus says, "come and see." (Remember that phrase.) One of these two was Andrew, who goes and gets his brother Simon, and says, "we have found the Messiah! Come and see." So, he does. Then the next day, Jesus found Phillip and said to him "come and follow me," so he does. But Phillip has someone he wants to share this good news with, which is where our scripture picks up...

Read John, chapter 1, verses 45 through 50.

“Come and see.” We see this phrase over and over again. And why is it important? Because these guys were waiting for the answer to their struggles. This was the answer to their question, “is there hope?”

Question 2: Consider this story. How would you have felt were you Nathanael? Would you have readily gone to see what Phillip was babbling about? Or would you have skeptically dismissed it? What else catches your attention about this Scripture?

REFLECTION

Andrew, Simon, Philip, and now, Nathanael weren't just sitting around passing the time. These weren't guys who had resigned themselves to a Messiah that may never come. We have to assume that many of their Hebrew brothers and sisters had. They'd been ruled by empire after empire for 700 years, no sign of any Messiah to bring them peace. We have to believe they'd lost hope. Not these boys... they were in it. These were guys who were helping prepare the way. These were guys who were waiting for the answer to the prophecies. These were guys who were actively hoping for the Messiah to come. They knew the struggles of their people. They knew the suffering their nation had endured. They knew how divided their society was. They knew the answer, and here he was... Jesus of Nazareth. (“Can

anything good come from Nazareth?” Bible got jokes.) Jesus calls them to “come and see.” Andrew and Philip can’t contain themselves, so they go invite Simon and Nathanael, respectively, to “come and see.” Why? Because Jesus’s arrival meant *hope*.

Question 3: These boys were waiting for the Messiah.

Jesus’s arrival meant the fulfillment of this longing. We are no longer waiting for the Messiah to appear... he done did. So, what does Jesus mean for you? In what areas of your life does Christ bring you hope?

Nathanael is excited to come and see the answer to his longing. His response says it all, “⁴⁹ **Then Nathanael exclaimed, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!”** (v.49) These words matter. He calls him, “Rabbi,” meaning teacher, recognizing his human authority. He calls him, “Son of God,” recognizing his Divine authority. But then he calls him the “King of Israel.” What Nathanael has stumbled on is something he would learn he completely understated. Jesus didn’t come to be King of Israel, Jesus came to usher the Kingdom of Heaven to Earth. This meant that, yes, they had a future in the next life to look forward to. But also, if they followed this man, they could make life a little better here and now. Would it be easy? No. But in *this* kingdom, in following Christ, they could find things like joy, peace, love, and mercy. For Nathanael, all these guys, the arrival of Jesus meant hope. That phrase, “come and see,” meant hope.

But here's the thing, following Christ, like we've been talking about for the last 3 months, the arrival of Jesus in *our* lives, is no different. Is there hope? Is there more than just the struggles we see around us? Yes. Jesus came to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to Earth 2000 years ago for Phillip and Nathanael, but also today, for us, now. And as for them, Jesus's arrival means hope for us. Does it mean, if we follow Jesus, every problem just magically goes away? Nope. Does it mean that we won't still have hardships and struggles? Nope. What it means is that we can experience what they did... joy and peace and love and mercy. It means we can have hope that there's something more and better than the difficulty we're going through. And we can bring those beautiful things to the world we're living in now. Jesus invited these guys to come and see this kingdom of hope. And they in turn invited others to come and see. And in doing so, they brought the hope they wanted for the world. We have the same opportunity. We can make this "following Jesus thing" a hobby, Or we can take it seriously... and...

BECOME

...the hope we want to see in the world. can We come and see what incredible things the Kingdom of God has for us. And we can in turn invite others to come and see those things, as well. Not through hate and anger and division, but through love and peace and mercy. Become the hope you want in the world.

Question 4: Pause for a moment in silence, ask God to show you an area of your life in which or someone specific for

whom you can be the hope you want to see in the world. Now, consider how you can then make this an action step for this week. Share with the group.

CLOSING

So, to wrap up 3 months of teaching. We know what it takes to be a disciple: to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. Will do you do that? Will you Believe that you have a God who is out there fighting ahead of you? Will you lean into the community to which you Belong? Will you embrace that you are a Beloved child of God? And will you Become the hope you wish to see in the world? Jesus has called you. Who will you be?

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations and close in prayer.