

Sermon 2nd Sunday after Epiphany, Yr. B @ St Johns – 17/1/21

“Come and see” (John 1:43-51)

- Pastor André Meyer

Pray: Father, by your Spirit, bless this time to grow our faith in your Son, in His name, Amen.

Have you ever received an excited message from a friend saying, *“Check this out! You’ve got to see this!”*? You might get a message from someone you trust with a link to a video on YouTube or Facebook saying, *“This is amazing!”* Often when we find something hilarious or good for the soul we want to share it in the very least with someone who’ll be able to appreciate it for what it is.

They are *‘come and see’* moments we all have. When we’ve got something exciting, amazing, worthwhile, or extraordinary – even something shocking – to share, we invite people to join in with our excitement, saying, *“Look at this – you won’t believe me otherwise. It’ll be worth it, trust me.”* Have you ever *found* something like that? Something so good you couldn't wait to share it with a friend?

Well today we hear about a man named Philip who couldn't wait to tell a friend about something good he'd found. What Philip found was *much more* important than a funny YouTube video, an amazing feat of skill, or a new product. He had met someone real and life changing – Jesus. When Philip met Jesus, he somehow knew or discovered, beyond doubt, that Jesus was the Saviour God had promised His people, and he became one of Jesus' disciples from then on.

After Philip met Jesus, he couldn't wait to tell his friend Nathanael. So, he went and found Nathanael and told him, *“We’ve found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – He’s the fulfilment of all the promises of God about His Messiah – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph”* (v.45). It's important to know that Nazareth was a small town with a mix of Jewish and non-Jewish people. Being a small town, off the beaten track, and not near any major cities, ‘out in the sticks’, it was the last place anyone would expect something interesting to happen. So, like a true Israelite who looked with suspicion upon anything not purely Jewish, or, as someone who didn't think that Nazareth was a place of any importance, or more particularly, from where God's promised One could come from, Nathanael cynically asks, *“Nazareth? Can anything good come from there?”* ...Thankfully Philip doesn't take the bait or argue the point. He just wants to share the good news that's been revealed to him, so, he offers Nathanael an invitation, *“Come and see,”* he answered. Nathanael must first *see* for himself, then, he can make up his own mind about Jesus. *“It’ll be worth it – trust me.”*

Nathanael's scepticism perhaps reveals his doubt. We too might often react in the same way when presented with something totally out of the ordinary. *“Sure – I’ll have a look. But, I’ll reserve my tick of approval (thumbs up or smiley face!) until*

after!" Like Nathanael we often feel we need to be convinced or won over. We may think we know better and will be the judge if it's worthy of our laughter or excitement. But God see things differently – He knows exactly what's good for us before we do.

I might have shared this story before, but I was reminded of it this week as I was preparing... Years ago, back in 2004 just before I was ordained, as graduates we needed to meet with the then President of the Church – Rev. Dr. Mike Semmler, whom some of you may know. He was the one who got to tell us where the Church had assigned us as pastor graduates. I remember going into his office in Archer Street, North Adelaide, and being asked, *"So André, what do you know about Robertstown?"* I guess he thought I wouldn't have a clue. The funny thing was that 10 months prior I'd played in a band for a friend's wedding up there. On that hot, 40 odd degree January day, my first impression was that it was like a ghost town out of the movies. There was no one in sight, and tumbleweed was *literally* rolling across the road! In fact, it's a very small town of about 120 people nestled amongst rolling hills, at the end of an old railway line out in the sticks of SA. Though I kept an open mind, I did ask myself in effect, *"Hmm. Can anything good come from there?"* The funny thing was, afterwards, as I was reflecting on my placement, decades before, in year 5 at Primary School, our headmistress had read to us from a book by Colin Thiele, 'The valley between.' For many years, Thiele lived in the area, and created some very interesting stories based on the people there.

As I shared the news of my placement out in the 'relative middle-of-nowhere' many of my friends couldn't believe the Church would make life so difficult for me; a single bloke in a country parish of three congregations, with no family support, in a reasonably isolated place. My friends, and even the locals, thought I would be out of there within 2 years! In effect people were saying, *"Robertstown? Can anything good come from there?"* A passionate South Aussie farmer I know, whenever I mentioned Victoria (where I originated), would banter with me and say, *"Victoria? Can anything good come from there?"* I'd reply, *"Well, you married one!"* Quick as you like, with a grin and a nod, he'd say, *"Exactly!"* ☺ His wife would always smile at that. Perhaps that's what some were saying about *me* when I accepted the call to St Johns? ☺ *"Can anything good come from SA?!"*

As it turned out, later on some of the country folk whom I hung out with said the same of me going to Perth – they didn't want me to leave, so they said, *"The city? Can anything good come from going there? Perth is the other side of the country!"*

But in each of these cases it wasn't the President, or the Robertstown people, or even you as St Johns, who were doing the speaking in my life. It was *God* through His Holy Spirit. It was Jesus through the Holy Spirit who was saying through each of these invitations, *"Come and see... Trust me – it'll be worth it."* And, years earlier,

God had prepared the ground, subtly sowing a few seeds along the way. All I needed to do was to step out and trust that God would be true to His Word.

It was the same of Nathanael when he was found by Philip who and shared the great news with him. *“Come and see...”* Philip said. *“It’ll be worth it – trust me!”* Nathanael trusted Philip enough to want to go and see what his friend was so excited about. He trusted his friend enough to *go and see who this Jesus* was. And, when he did, Nathanael discovered that Jesus somehow already knew him. So, Nathanael became a follower of Jesus as well. In fact, Nathanael was so surprised and blessed with meeting Jesus that, he declared in faith, *“Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”* It’s almost like he couldn’t believe he didn’t trust his friend Philip enough. Yet, when he met Jesus, he was blessed to know and trust that He *was indeed the Christ*.

As we reflect on this passage it’s important to notice *who it is* that does the *finding*. Jesus *finds* Philip (v.43); Philip *finds* Nathanael (v.45); and then together, Philip and Nathanael *find* Jesus (v.47). Who is it that finds them first? It is Jesus. Jesus even *sees* Nathanael and finds him resting or praying under the fig tree *before* Nathanael even *knows anything* about Jesus (v.48). The truth is that Jesus is always the one who sees and finds *us first* – wherever we are at, and in whatever situation we are in. In this world of spiritual darkness and blindness, God is the one *who first finds us* – it’s *never* truly the other way around. For, God knows us – inside and out. And yet, He still comes to find us where we are; He opens our hearts and saves us.

At times, particularly when we feel down, we also might ask the same question Nathanael asked Philip. We may ask it of our *own* hearts, particularly when we struggle with those sins that niggle at us or pull us down. *“Can anything good come from my heart? ...From me?”* But, it’s not such a bad place for us to start, for, the light God creates, begins in the darkness. Faith, receives from God and responds. We don’t do the finding; God does the revealing. He is the one who opens *our* eyes to *who* He is and *what* He has done. *“Can anything good come from me?”* Jesus says, *“Yes, I can change things. Trust me. Come and see...”*

Some may have the same attitude about worship or St Johns? *“Can anything good come from going there? ...From worshipping regularly? ...From those Lutherans?”* Jesus says, *“Come and see...”*

Some say cynical things about your faith in Jesus... *“Can anything good come from the Church? ...From Christianity? Can anything good come from knowing Jesus?”* Instead of arguing the point and getting nowhere, you might answer them with a loving invitation as Philip did, *“Come and see...”*

Philip then took Nathanael to *see* Jesus, and in that time, Jesus revealed Himself to Nathanael, and Nathanael became Jesus' disciple. That's how the good news is spread. By friends telling friends the exciting news of what Jesus has done for us, and, what He can also do for them. Then, inviting them to meet Jesus for themselves. Even if they answer 'no' – the invitation remains.

When we find something good we naturally want to share it with everyone. We can't wait to share it with our friends and family. That's how the Church grew from strength to strength. Friends telling friends! Inviting them *not* 'to church' but into a relationship with Jesus. And we can do the same as well. Jesus not only calls ordinary people like you and me to 'follow Him,' but He *uses* ordinary people, like *us*, to invite others to 'come and see' Jesus as well.

This year, let's trust God's Spirit when He prompts us to invite people to 'come and see' and know Jesus. For, by His death and resurrection Jesus made it possible *for all* to have a new relationship with God. That indeed, is much more exciting, real, and life-changing than the best video clips we will ever see, share or get excited about. "*Can anything good come from knowing Jesus?*" "*Come and see...*" Let us trust Him, and respond to Jesus' call to trust and follow Him. For, He knows us, and all our needs, and loves us still. In gratitude to our Saviour, like Philip, let our invitation be heard, "*Come, and see...*" Amen.

Pray: Heavenly Father, nothing can compare to the Good News of Jesus our Saviour. By your Spirit, help us to invite people to 'come and see' Jesus for themselves. In Jesus' name, Amen.