



Worship and Sermon Suggestions

1) Hymn of the Day: Will You Come and Follow Me (*see attached sheet with copyright permission*)

2) Other hymn suggestions:

a) from Lutheran Book of Worship:

285 Spirit of God, sent from heaven abroad
286 Bow down your ear, Almighty Lord
381 Hark, the voice of Jesus calling
383 Rise up, O saints of God!
403 Lord, speak to us, that we may speak
406 Take my life, that I may be
472/3 Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire
492 O Master, let me walk with you
494 Jesus call us; o'er the tumult
503 O Jesus, I have promised

b) from With One Voice:

652 Arise, Your Light Has Come!
683 Loving Spirit
712 Listen, God Is Calling
723 The Spirit Sends Us Forth To Serve
752 I, the Lord of Sea and Sky
753 You Are the Seed
754 Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ
755 We All Are One in Mission
756 Lord, You Give the Great Commission
773 Send Me, Jesus
776 Be Thou My Vision
784 You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore

c) from Renewing Worship Songbook;

R127 Christ, Be Our Light
R191 Rise, O Church, like Christ Arisen
R223 In Christ Called to Baptize
R237 When Pain of the World Surrounds Us
R247 O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate
R251 We Are Called

R266 Lead Me, Guide Me
R276 Will You Come and Follow Me
R277 Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song
R279 Make Me a Channel of Your Peace
R281 Have Thine Own Way, Lord
R282 Take My Life, That I May Be

2) Prayer suggestions:

A Lord, we thank you for calling us in our baptism to be your people in Jesus Christ. Fill us always with joy and gratitude for the precious gift of your grace. Help us to live each day in love, as you have first loved us. Lord in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

A Lord of the church, we pray that you would raise up pastors and diaconal ministers to serve your church. Give to us all a new passion for ministry. Set our hearts on fire with your love. Fill us with boldness and gladness to proclaim your Word in the church and in the world. Lord in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

A Lord, you know the needs of your church today. We thank you for the example of pastors who have gone before us, who have led your church in the past. Like them, help us to respond to your call by dedicating our lives to your service. Lord in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

A We pray for our congregation, and for all who worship here this day. Be with us in our common life together. Open our eyes to recognize the loving presence of Christ in each other. Help us to encourage those who are called to ministry in our congregation. Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer. Lord in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

A You give each of us opportunities to live out your calling each day. May we always seek new opportunities to do your will. Help us to show Christ's love and compassion to our families, neighbours, co-workers and even strangers we encounter day by day. Lord in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

A We remember before you this day those who are in special need around us: the sick, the lonely, the destitute, the homeless, the persecuted. Especially we pray for _____. Look with compassion upon those in our world who live with injustice, fear, hatred and oppression. Use us to be agents of your love; help us to care in practical ways for those around us who are in need. Lord in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

3) Sermon suggestions – The Rev. Dr. Tim Hegedus, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

Gospel Lesson: John 1:43-51

1) Exegesis:

This text forms part of a longer passage about the call of Jesus' disciples in the first chapter of John's Gospel. After John the Baptist publicly proclaims Jesus as 'the Lamb of God' (John 1.36), two of John's disciples respond to Jesus' invitation to come and see where he was staying (1.39). One of these disciples is Andrew, and he goes to tell his brother Simon about Jesus, identifying Jesus as the Messiah (1:40-41; the text explains that this latter term means 'Christ', i.e. 'anointed one'). Andrew brings Simon to meet Jesus (1:42). This is why traditionally St Andrew has been regarded as the patron of Christian missions. And when Jesus meets Simon he renames him 'Cephas' (1.42; the text explains that this Aramaic word means 'Peter' in Greek; both are connected with the word for 'rock,' cf. Matthew 16.18). Thus the theme of the call to discipleship has been well established by the time we get to today's text, John 1.43-51. And here too one disciple brings another prospective disciple to Jesus, Nathanael.

In 1.43 Jesus calls Philip, saying 'Follow me,' the very same words found in the story of the call of the first disciples when they are out fishing (Mark 1.16-20; Matthew 4.18-22). It was of course common for a rabbi like Jesus to develop a following of disciples; however, according to the Talmud (Mishnah 'Abot 1.6, 16) it was expected that disciples would seek out their own teachers. Thus Jesus' call 'Follow me' reverses the usually expected order; as we see elsewhere (Mark 2.14; Matthew 9.9, Luke 5.10, 27) here too Jesus summons people directly to be his disciples. Jesus' call, and the wholehearted response of disciples such as Philip, demonstrates the compelling nature of Jesus' call. For behind Jesus' call is the person of Jesus himself; it is because of who Jesus is that people respond to the call to discipleship.

Chapter 1.43-44 emphasizes the location where the call took place, Galilee. According to John 7.1, Galilee is a safe place for Jesus' ministry in contrast with Judea (where Jerusalem is located, the place where Jesus will suffer and die). Since Galilee was regarded as 'the boonies' of Palestine, the location of Jesus' ministry in Galilee is evidence of God's presence and work among 'nobodies', the socially marginalized (cf. 4.43-44, 7.52). The other characters in this passage are from Galilee as well. Philip is from Bethsaida (1.44), a fishing town on the Sea of Galilee, and Nathanael is from Cana (John 21.2) which is near Nazareth also in Galilee.

Just as Jesus 'found' Philip (1.43) so in turn Philip 'found' Nathaniel (1.45). Philip proclaims to Nathanael that Jesus is the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote (1.45). Since Moses was regarded as the author of the Pentateuch this must be a reference to the 'Law and the Prophets,' a way of referring to the Hebrew Scriptures (Matthew 5.17, 7.12; 11.13, Luke 16.16, Romans 3.21). Philip is confessing that the Scriptures point to Jesus, that the prophecies and promises of the Bible are all fulfilled in him. This is a common notion in the Gospel of John (2.17, 22; 6.45; 7.37-39; 12.14-16; 20.9). Philip's confession to Nathanael in 1.45 is structurally parallel to Andrew's earlier confession that Jesus is the Messiah in 1.41. These confessions of faith in Jesus will come to a climax in Nathanael's confession made directly to Jesus, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' (1.49). Note that Philip describes Jesus as the 'son of Joseph from Nazareth' (1.45, cf. 6.42). This is not in ignorance of or opposition to Jesus' birth from the Virgin Mary, which was a very early tradition as well. In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus' descent from Joseph (Matt 1.16; Luke 3.23; 4.22) is meant to emphasize Jesus' Davidic heritage (the Messiah was to be a descendant of King David) and likely that is the best way to take Philip's words in 1.45 as well.

Nathanael's famous response 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' has puzzled many Christians. It is most likely a flippant comment but there is also a note of contempt in Nathanael's words. In John 7.52 it is understandable that Jesus' enemies (who are Judean) say 'no prophet is to rise from Galilee' but why does Nathanael, himself a Galilean, take offense at the fact that Jesus is from Galilee? Perhaps this is another example of how people were reluctant to accept that one of their own could be the promised One sent by God; as Jesus says elsewhere, prophets are not without honour except in their own country (John 4.44; Matthew 13.54-57; Luke 4.24). Another contrast between Nathanael and the Judean leadership in chapters 7 is that while in 7.10-52 extensive argument fails to convince the leadership that Jesus is to be believed despite his Galilean origins, Nathanael comes to believe through a personal encounter with Jesus. According to John's Gospel, through Jesus one is given a

personal experience of God (1.14, 18; 9.25; 10.4; 14.6-11). In Nathanael's case, this occurs because of Philip's invitation to 'come and see' just as in 1.39 Jesus had invited Andrew and another disciple to 'come and see.'

Jesus' divine insight (cf. 2.24-25) into Nathanael's character is expressed in 1.47 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' In the Gospel of John, just as Jesus is true (1.9; 6.32, 55; 7.18; 15.1) so Nathanael is a 'true' Israelite, implicitly contrasted with 'the Jews' who oppose Jesus in the Gospel of John. It is important to remember that Jesus himself was one of 'the Jews' and so it is anachronistic to portray 'the Jews' as a whole in opposition to him. This negative portrayal of 'the Jews' in the Gospel of John is not historical but reflects a later situation of alienation between the Johannine community and the Jews at the time of the Gospel's writing (around the end of the first century); out of the enormous quantity of literature on this topic I would recommend as a starting point *Befriending the Beloved Disciple* by Adele Reinhartz (New York: Continuum, 2001). As well, describing Nathanael as one 'in whom there is no deceit' may be an implicit contrast with the father of the people of Israel, Jacob, who cheated his brother Esau out of his birthright (Genesis 25.29-34). The image of Nathanael beneath a fig tree (1.48) is unclear; the fig tree may stand for Judaism, and so Nathanael may represent those to whom John the Baptist said that Jesus would be revealed (1.31). The point of 1.48 is that Jesus already knows Nathanael even before they meet face to face. When Nathanael hears this he comes to faith in Jesus, confessing this faith in 1.49.

Jesus replies with a promise that Nathanael will see 'greater things than these' (1.50) and then follows (1.51) one of the 'Very truly I say to you' ('Amên, amên, lego- humin' in Greek) statements that are only found in the Gospel of John (25 times). Such statements are authoritative and are directed not just to the individual Jesus is speaking to (in this case, Nathanael) but to us as readers of the Gospel as well (the pronoun 'to you' is plural). As with the confessions of Philip and Nathanael, the point of Jesus' words in 1.51 is christological: he identifies himself as the 'Son of Man' upon whom the angels will ascend and descend. The title 'Son of Man' is common in the Synoptic Gospels, and is likely a messianic reference. Here in John 1.51 it seems to express the notion that the Son of Man bridges heaven and earth by coming from heaven to earth (John 3.13); the opening of the heavens also occurred at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3.16, Mark 1.10, Luke 3.21). And of course the image of angels ascending and descending recalls Jacob's dream of the ladder in Genesis 28.10-17, except that in John 1.51 Jesus himself takes the place of the ladder: Jesus is the bridge between heaven and earth, the divine and human come together in and through him.

2) Tips for Preaching:

This passage lends itself very well to the themes of 'It's Your Call' Sunday. Ministry is about mission. Pastors and diaconal ministers are engaged in the mission of the church. What does this mean? According to today's text, the mission of the church is about encountering Jesus and enabling others to encounter Jesus as well.

The initiative starts with Jesus himself, who reaches out to Philip and calls him to discipleship. We do well to remember that this is always the beginning of the church's mission. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1.14). In the Incarnation God took the initiative to reach out to humanity with God's unconditional love. We in the church engage in outreach because first and foremost God in Christ has reached out to us. Similarly, in our text it is because Jesus 'found' Philip (1.43) that Philip goes out to 'find' Nathanael (1.45). This is the proper order in which to understand the church's mission and ministry. The initiative is God's, not ours. And so the focus of our mission is God in Christ, not ourselves.

In today's text outreach takes place through invitation. In 1.46 Philip says to Nathanael 'Come and see'. This is a wonderful way to think of the work of ministry - not just the professional ministry of pastors and diaconal ministers, but the ministry of all the baptized. All Christians are called to invite people to 'come and see' Jesus. We do this through words, but most powerfully through our actions, when we care for others with radical, unconditional love and mercy and acceptance. When people experience our loving actions, when people experience us as loving people, they will naturally be drawn to 'come and see' Jesus. 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.' (John 13.35. Pastors and diaconal ministers affirm and encourage all the baptized in this work of inviting people to 'come and see' Jesus through our words and deeds.

Secondly, in today's text outreach takes place through confession of faith. Philip says, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth' (1.45). When Nathanael

hears this confession, he responds by coming to see Jesus for himself. Through his encounter with Jesus Nathanael too becomes a disciple who makes his own confession, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' (1.49) Confessing our faith is also part of the ministry of all the baptized. Most of us do this quietly, in ways that are hidden and unobtrusive: we are all too aware of the damage that has been done to the cause of the Gospel by loud, obnoxious and self-serving preachers. Yet there is also a time to stand up and speak out about what our faith means to us. Pastors and diaconal ministers are called to do this in public, as faithful representatives of our Lutheran tradition, in the context of public worship; in this way we enable all the baptized to bear witness to our faith in Christ.

In the Gospel of John faith in Jesus is confessed in multiple ways. In our text, Philip affirms that Jesus is the fulfillment of Scripture and the son of Joseph. Nathanael says that Jesus is the Son of God and the King of Israel. And the text ends with the picture of Jesus as the ladder in Jacob's dream at Bethel, with angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man, i.e. Jesus as the One who is the bridge between heaven and earth, bringing God to us and us to God. The whole of the Gospel of John contains many, many more images that express the meaning of Jesus in diverse ways. There is room in the church for expressing the meaning of faith in Jesus in different ways. Pastors and diaconal ministers are called to encourage all people in the church to articulate the meaning of their faith for themselves and to imagine new ways to think about and express the meaning of Jesus for today. What an incredible task this is!

According to our text, the church's mission is to make disciples. This is not a simple or simplistic notion. The call to discipleship cannot be condensed into a neat or easy formula. Instead, the call to discipleship takes place in the context of relationships. People are drawn to Jesus through our loving relationships with the people around us. And in experiencing Jesus, people are drawn into a new life of following in the way of Jesus, which is the way of the cross. The awesome and joyous gift of ministry is to enable people to follow the way of Jesus day by day by God's grace. Thanks be to God for the call to ministry and discipleship!