

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.”

<sup>44</sup> Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. <sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

<sup>46</sup> “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.

“Come and see,” said Philip.

<sup>47</sup> When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.”

<sup>48</sup> “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

<sup>49</sup> Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”

<sup>50</sup> Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.” <sup>51</sup> He then added, “I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” (NIV 84)

Theme: Jesus says to you, “Follow Me!”

1. He Calls you through his Word.
2. He increases your faith through his Word

One of the most popular and fastest growing websites the last couple of years is Twitter. For those of you who don’t know what Twitter is, it’s a website that allows users to send and read short messages called “tweets.” Tweets can be about anything you want them to be—they could be funny, serious, or perhaps an ad for a store. Any tweet that you post will be seen by anyone who follows you. And if you want, you can choose to follow any of the roughly 300 million users on Twitter and be alerted when they make a tweet.

There are all kinds of people you might choose to follow on Twitter, like your friends. But you could also follow athletes, musicians, politicians, and so on. There would be all kinds of reasons why you

might follow someone on twitter. And there are many lists out there telling you who to follow on twitter.

Today we take a look at a different kind of following. Today Jesus says to you, “Follow Me!” But this following is not just being updated whenever someone writes something. To follow Jesus means to believe in him and to obey him. But this is something our sinful nature doesn’t want to do. It’s not fun, exciting, or entertaining—there is nothing that should lead us to want to follow Jesus. And yet, you do follow him. Through his powerful Word Christ calls you to faith, and through that word he keeps you in the one true faith.

Not long after Jesus was baptized he began to gather some disciples. The day after John, Andrew, and Peter started following him, he decided to go to Galilee. And there, he found Philip. He said to him, **Follow Me!** And Philip did. All Jesus had to say was two simple words, and Philip followed. To Andrew and John, Jesus only had to say **Come, and you will see**, and they did. Amazing isn’t? Jesus’ simple words, led someone to follow him. He simply went up to complete strangers and said a few words and they followed him. Why would they follow him?

He wasn’t a celebrity. They had no idea who he was. Or what he did. Isaiah prophesied about Jesus, **He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.** There is no reason for those men to give up everything and follow him. Not only is there nothing about the outward of appearance of Jesus, that would lead us to follow him, by nature we also hate everything about him. For by nature, we are his enemies. We can’t stand God or his son. And we want nothing to do with him. If it were up to us when Jesus said to us, **Follow me**, we never would. Why would we want to follow our enemy?

And yet Jesus says to you what he said to Philip, **Follow me.** And he stopped what he was doing, left everything behind and followed him. That is the power of Christ’s Word. Through it he calls you. Through it you were brought to faith. The Holy Spirit, working through the Word of Christ, causes you to believe in him. He leads you to believe in something that you would never believe on your own. Not only does Jesus tell you to follow him in his Word, but through his Word he

also leads you to follow him. A few simple words from Jesus, and you are turned from an unbeliever to a believer and follower.

When Philip became a believer, he did what was natural for him. He went and told his friend Nathanael. **We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.** But Nathanael was skeptical. **Can anything good come out of Nazareth?** We find out elsewhere that Nathanael was from Cana—not too far from Nazareth. He probably knew Nazareth quite well. And he was unimpressed. It was a small, unimportant town. A hick town in the middle of the country. How could the Messiah come from such a worthless place? So what did Philip say in response? **Come and See.** He didn't have a clever argument. He didn't try to spice up the story. He presented it as it was, and let the Holy Spirit work through the gospel.

He could do this because the Word is powerful. Through it, he was brought to faith—and so were you. It doesn't need to be spiced up. It doesn't need to be hidden or disguised. And yet, you may be tempted to do just that. You may be tempted to add or hide the Word to make it more attractive. Perhaps you think, “we should get a band in here, or have coffee and donuts during church. After all, more people are going to come to church if its fun. The gospel isn't enough to keep people's interests, we must entertain them somehow. Or instead of inviting people to hear God's word, we can trick them—by inviting them for something else and sneaking the word in there. Or maybe we should get rid of some of the Bible's teachings—ones that may be offensive to some people—that way it is more attractive. No one wants to be told they are sinners. Let's just teach about things that make people feel good about themselves.”

So instead of saying, **Come and see**, like Philip, you may say come and see some of it, or come for a different reason, and we'll sneak some of God's word in there. At times, you don't trust the word. It's not good enough, or effective enough, or entertaining enough. And you fail to trust in the one working through the Word. And you fail to remember that it is the Holy Spirit who gives the Word its power. And he used the same Word to bring you to faith. Through it you, God's enemy, became his follower. It is the same powerful word that

Jesus used to call Philip and the other disciples. It is the same Word which Philip invited Nathanael to, **Come and see.**

When Philip gave this invitation to Nathanael, they went to see Jesus. And when Jesus saw Nathanael coming he said, **Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!** Later he told Nathanael, **Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.**

How could Jesus possibly know Nathanael? How could Jesus have seen him earlier? The only possible explanation is that Jesus is God. For he knew only what God could know. Instantly Nathanael had faith. He knew that Jesus was the promised Savior.

And he confessed his faith. **Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!** He called Jesus, teacher. Jesus was the one who taught him the true meaning of God's Word. He knew that Jesus was sent from God. He is God's son. And God himself. He confessed that Jesus was the king of Israel. He was the one who would rule of his people.

This is a great confession of faith by Nathanael. One that couldn't have made if he never would have heard the Word. The Holy Spirit never would have brought him to faith through the Word. For it is only through the Words of Christ that Nathanael came to faith. And the more he talked to Jesus, the stronger his faith became. That is the effect that the powerful Word of Christ has. It not only brings us to faith, but it also increases our faith.

After hearing just a few short words from Christ, Nathanael believed. But he was going to see more. Jesus said to him, **Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.** Nathanael already believed because he saw a little bit of Christ's glory. He may look like a man but he is also God, Nathanael realized. And now he would see even more of Christ's divine glory. Soon he would see him turn water into wine; later Jesus would walk on water, raise a few people from the dead, and heal many physical diseases. He would hear Jesus preach God's word with the authority a mere man couldn't have. He would see Jesus prophesy and that prophecy would become fulfilled. He would see Jesus suffer and die on the cross. And he would be there that Easter night, three days later, when Jesus appeared to them. What's the point

Nathanael was brought to faith, and he stuck around to learn more. And he did—his faith was strengthened.

At times, however, we don't act like Nathanael. We may instead, be satisfied with coming to faith. And not wanting to grow in the Word. Sure, we know that Jesus is our Savior. That he was born on Christmas, died on Good Friday, and rose from the dead on Easter. We were in Sunday School. We spent our years in Confirmation Class. And now we know, all there is to know. We often act like we have nothing else to learn. So we fail to get into the word. We fail to read our Bibles or a devotional book. We are too busy to attend Bible class. And as a result we never grow in our faith and knowledge or see greater things than these.

But what exactly did Jesus have in mind that Nathanael would see? He told him, **Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.** When Jesus said this, he was saying that you will see the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled. In Isaiah 64 we read, **Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down.** When Jesus was born, the heavens were opened. When Jesus was born God came down to this earth. As Nathanael spent more time in the word, he was going to understand that Jesus is God and that he fulfilled this prophecy. In Genesis 28, Jacob was running away from his brother Esau. He thought that his brother was going to kill him the birthright. So God appeared to Jacob in a dream. In that dream Jacob saw a staircase or ladder going from heaven to earth and angels ascending and descending on it. And here Jesus said, **you will see angels ascending and descending on the son of man.** Jesus is the fulfillment of Jacob's dream. As God and man he is the bridge to heaven and earth. He is our mediator. And without him no one can go from earth to heaven.

Jesus said that the angels would ascend and descend on the **Son of Man.** This is a reference to Daniel 7. There we learn that the Son of Man, is not just a man, but he is God. For he has the power and glory of God. Daniel prophesied, **behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which**

**shall not pass away.** Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy—he is the Son of Man. This means that Jesus is God.

That is something you probably didn't know before. But now you do. Why? Because you were in the Word. Through it God has brought you to faith. Through it your faith was strengthened. That is how God works. He works through the Word. You aren't going to learn more about Christ and grow in your faith, by sleeping in instead of going to church. By watching TV instead of getting into your Bible. By letting other things get in the way of attending Bible Class.

As Christians we want to be in the word. We want to hear more about Christ. We want our faith to increase. We aren't satisfied with the basics. We want to know more. So we get into the Word. Bible Class, Devotions, and Worship are now a top priority in our lives. For through the Word Christ increases our faith.

**Follow Me!** Jesus said, to Philip and to you. To follow Jesus doesn't just mean to read a short message from him from time to time. But to believe in him. Jesus calls you the same way he called Philip—through the Word. He increases your faith the same way he increased the faith of Nathanael—through the Word. So we follow Christ by getting into his word. For that is what his followers love to do. Amen.