

*43The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." 44Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." 46Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" 48Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." 49Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." 51And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."*

You never know when you are going to meet someone who will be important in your life. For every best friend there was a moment in time when you first saw one another, first introduced yourself, first became acquainted. Now maybe your intuition is better than mine but time and again I am surprised when someone I did not give much thought becomes very significant to me or to the congregation. You just never know in that first meeting where it all will lead.

So it was that day. I doubt Phillip awoke that morning expecting to meet someone who would turn his life upside down. But on the day Jesus decided to go to Galilee and he found Phillip and said to him, "Follow me." Phillip found Nathaniel and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathaniel said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Phillip said, "Come and see."

John tells us that Jesus is the one who found Phillip. But when Phillip speaks he declares, "We have found him." Phillip thought he was the one in charge even though Jesus was doing the choosing. It may seem that your whole life with God depends on you – you choose when to speak to God in prayer, you choose when to read the bible, whether or not to attend worship. But sometimes we become aware of God putting the right people in our lives, people who bring us home to God. I have heard the words, "I found Jesus" greeted with the response, "I did not know he was the one who was lost." It is all a matter of who is in the driver's seat – does everything depend on you – your

finding, your praying, your believing or does everything depend on Jesus? The answer is that everything does depend on Jesus and not on you. If it were any other way your hope would be based on yourself – on the very one who gets you into the fixes that remind you how much you depend on God. Someone once said that we should work as if everything depends on us but that we should pray knowing that everything depends on God.

When Phillip told Nathaniel about Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth, Nathaniel came back with the line, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Obviously Nathaniel did not think much of folks from Nazareth. On this weekend when our nation is remembering Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his witness to the dignity of each person regardless of their race, Nathaniel’s comment takes on a whole new meaning. Being prejudiced is nothing new. But getting to know someone can change everything. Phillip invited Nathaniel to come and see Jesus. He went.

When Jesus saw Nathaniel coming toward him he declared of him, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” Jesus knew Nathaniel, prejudice and all. Jesus did not wait for Nathaniel to change his attitude before Jesus would relate to him. Jesus met Nathaniel where Nathaniel was.

The same is true with you. Jesus is not waiting for you to dress your life in Sunday best before he will have anything to do with you. He knows you and begins with you right where you are.

Nathaniel asked Jesus, “How did you get to know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Phillip called you.” Nathaniel replied, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

What a confession of faith – Son of God and King of Israel. All the hopes of the nation would be realized in this one. But little did Nathaniel expect that this king of Israel would reign from a cross. This Son of God would die a man.

Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these. Very truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of Man?”

Jacob's ladder. Jacob, the night he left home having deceived his father and cheated his brother had a dream. In that dream he saw a ladder to heaven and angels ascending and descending upon it. The Son of man will be that ladder, connecting heaven and earth. That is what Jesus promised Nathaniel that he would see.

In Jesus heaven and earth come together – God and humans joined in his being and brought together for all eternity. Because of Jesus nothing will ever separate us from the love of God.

We never hear Nathaniel speak again in the scriptures. He is mentioned again but once – the day he is fishing with some of the other disciples after Jesus' resurrection. Jesus helps them catch a great catch of fish and then invites them to share breakfast with him on the shore. Otherwise he is never mentioned again.

I wonder about that. Was Nathaniel like a few I have encountered – so full of enthusiasm right away but then withering like the seed planted on rocky ground? I hope not. But whatever happened to Nathaniel Jesus knew him and promised that he would see the Son of man – a ladder connecting heaven and earth.

Jesus knows you. What does he have planned for you? I hope it is a deep and abiding faith in him that is in store for you.