

## The Text: John 1:43-51

Throughout the readings today there is a clear message. God knows you. Those beautiful words of Psalm 139 that assure us we are no accident, that the Lord has known us intricately even as He knit us together in our mothers' wombs. The Lord's call to the young Samuel reminds us that even before we know Him, He knows us well enough to have a plan in place for us. And then the gospel where our Lord Jesus speaks of Nathanael in a way that reveals He shares this knowledge of us all with His Heavenly Father. God knows you inside out. But more than that, the gospel especially reveals that He wants you and others to know Him as well.

But isn't there something just a little bit scary about being known this well? All of us are masters of disguise when it comes to holding back those bits of ourselves we don't think others would like. Very few people feel confident enough to show themselves completely to everybody they meet. Surely that's because most of us fear rejection and lost affection if we show our true selves completely. The closer we get to someone the more we reveal, but even then there are limits. Most of us protect those dark little nooks and crannies that lie beneath the surface – those sinful thoughts and longings, the shame and regret of the dark moments in our past, the anxieties and uncertainties we struggle with. We cover these over in all sorts of ways. And so the thought that God see through our self-styled barriers and knows us without limit is pretty confronting, isn't it?

After all this is not some sort of superficial knowledge we're talking about here. God knows our sinful nature and yet forgives us. What's more, He still sent His Son to die for your sins. All our fears that if God really knew what we were like, He wouldn't want anything to do with us are unfounded. Jesus birth, His life and death prove that despite knowing us perfectly (good and bad) God still shows His love for us without limit. He sees through the facade of respectability we build around ourselves. Through the fig trees we take shelter under He still wants to grab hold of us for eternity.

It may seem a little spooky to know that your Lord Jesus can see right through you-and along the way see everything you try to hide inside of you. But Jesus' divine perception is only frightening if you foolishly keep trying to hide something from Him. Jesus came for the purpose of cleansing you of all your sins, that task was as good as done as soon as your Lord was baptized. When He was baptized, He took upon Himself all those sins you feel like you need to hide, and after carrying them for three years or so, Jesus killed all of those sins by dying on the cross with them.

Our natural human condition is one in which we try to justify ourselves before God and prove our worth. Jesus did NOT say Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite, in whom there is no sin." Jesus is much more interested in your honesty about your sins-which is the flip side of faith. Jesus said to Nathanael, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" One who recognises his need for a Saviour.

The point is, Jesus knows you, so why try and hide anything from Him? He knows you and still He comes as your Saviour to deal with the sin and guilt that lies within us all. As St. John explains in another place, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9). As we confess here publicly, as well

as privately, we reveal what is hidden and Jesus deals with it – robbing sin of its power and remaking us through His forgiving love. Why? So He can restore the relationship with God perfectly, eternally.

Jesus knows all people intimately. But the sad reality is, not all people know Him in the way He revealed Himself to Nathanael. Not all people know Him as the Saviour who longs to forgive our sins and claim us as His own. Philip came to know Jesus – he recognised Jesus as Saviour and Lord and so he invited others to come and see Jesus as well, so they might know Him too. I wonder how many times we hesitate to invite people to meet Jesus in this way? So often we don't see the urgency of it – we'll just wait for the right time, we think.

How often don't we hesitate to speak those words of invitation? To our kids? To our mates? To our colleagues? We hesitate for all sorts of reasons – not the least of which is timing. But you know we also worry about having the right words to say. Philip doesn't wait for either of these things. He simply bowls up to Nathanael who is sitting quietly under the fig tree and invites him to come and see Jesus. To meet this Friend and Saviour of sinners.

Jesus made Philip a disciple in the wink of an eye, simply by speaking His word, "Follow Me." That was enough to re-create and strengthen the gift of faith that Philip had learned from his earliest lessons in Scriptures. By the power of Jesus' speaking, Philip believed and followed Him.

The same miracle-producing power that was in Jesus' mouth now entered Philip's mouth. When Philip went to Nathanael and said, "We have found Him of whom [we learned about in Sunday School]," Philip was not speaking mere information to Nathanael. Philip was speaking the same divine Word of forgiveness and life to Nathanael that Jesus first spoke to him when He said to Philip, "Follow Me." In Philip's speaking, Jesus exerts His faith-producing power over Nathanael. In Philip's speaking, the miracle of faith and hope and eternal life burrows deeper into Nathanael's heart and mind. In Philip's speaking, God performed a miracle that produced faith in Nathanael and brought him the gift of eternal life. The Holy Spirit at work!

So, it is with your speaking of the Word as well, dear saints. You may feel powerless to speak to others about Jesus. You may feel that you don't really know what to say. Say it anyway! Philip didn't create a fancy theological treatise or a polished sermon manuscript or a lofty argument. Philip didn't really do all that much at all. The best he could muster was, "We've heard about this guy before and I think you should meet Him."

You have met this same Lord because someone said to you, 'Come and see Jesus.' Whether it was your parents bringing you to the font as a baby and lovingly dragging you along to worship, or a friend in later life who dared to say 'come along'. The result is the same. The Lord knows and loves you, and by His grace you know Him as your Friend and Saviour. God grant you His Spirit so that you may rejoice in this knowledge and share it with those around you. Amen.