

ST PAUL'S (RONDEBOSCH)

SERMON (SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY)

17 JANUARY 2021

**YEAR B (JOHN 1:43-51//1 SAMUEL 3:1-10/PSALM 139:1-6; 13-18//
1CORINTHIANS 6:12-20)**

.....
God you speak to us as a loving Father

Help us to take time to listen to you

And be open to what you are saying to us

We ask this through Christ our Lord AMEN

We are in the Season of Epiphany and during this season we are reminded of God's manifestation in the world through the person of Jesus Christ to be a light and bring salvation to all nations. It is also a season where we as the Church and individuals are challenged to fulfil our calling and mission.

Last week we celebrated the Baptism of Jesus Christ and we were reminded of the meaning of our own baptism. At our baptism we are also commissioned to be disciples and proclaim Christ's saving love and be a light in the dark and broken world.

At our baptism it is said

“Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified

Fight valiantly under the banner of Christ against sin, the world and the devil

And continue his faithful soldiers and servants

To the end of your lives

And

By baptism into Christ you pass from darkness to light

Shine as a light in the world

To the glory of God the Father”

The Baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of his public ministry and remind Christians that it is our baptism which is the basis for all ministry in the Church.

The public ministry of Jesus today is that which is carried out by each one of us, who make up the body of Christ the Church. Preaching the truth, in love, bearing witness to the Father, caring for the poor, being attentive to the Spirit, recognizing the presence of God by respecting the environment, seeking justice and peace, offering thanksgiving to God in our worship—all these are public works of the Son that must be carried out by God's people.

The Season of Epiphany is the time to ask ourselves whether we are being faithful to the public ministry with which we were charged at our baptism

In the Old Testament reading we have the story of God speaking and calling the boy Samuel and in our Gospel reading we have an account of God calling his first disciples.

THIS MORNING I WANT US TO DISCERN GOD'S CALL ON OUR LIVES AND OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S CALL ESPECIALLY DURING THIS CHALLENGING TIME OF COVID 19 AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

And maybe you think this morning what can I do, this problem is so big it is worldwide. I don't have the gifts, the talents, I am not a good speaker and don't have the theological knowledge or even finances to do anything.

In 1 Samuel 3v 1 we read the **boy** Samuel. When this story occurred Samuel was about 12 or 13 years old, God called Samuel at that young aged He was to become the prophet through whom the Lord would make himself known once again in Israel.

Let's turn to our Gospel reading

In our Gospel reading we read about Jesus calling Andrew, Peter, Phillip, Nathaniel and it is assumed that the other disciple was John.

They were not men of great scholarship, or influence or wealth or social background. They were ordinary fishermen. They were a pretty diverse lot, all had different personalities, they argued with one another and with Jesus, they had

different political views, they had different religious views from what we can tell. But Jesus called and used them to share the Good News with others.

The passage starts off with Christ's call to Philip. We aren't given many details about the call; John only tells us that Philip responded in faith and followed. Then look at what Philip did: he found Nathaniel and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth."

Philip was enthusiastic about sharing his encounter with Christ. This is often the way the gospel spreads – from one person to another in the context of a relationship.

Nathaniel, however, came back with a cynical reply, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"

Why would he ask such a question?

Nathanael asked that question because he was just a little sceptical. He knew what kind of people lived in Nazareth because he had been living in the area. From his perspective there was plenty to question about the possibility of a Messiah . . . from Nazareth.

Nathaniel, as a good Israelite, longed for God to redeem Israel. He longed for God to send a Messiah who would lead Israel into a new era of international prominence. Like so many Israelites, he bound up his sense of purpose and worth with his people. And yet he suffered only disappointment. The Maccabean war a century and a half before had failed to establish Israel's prominence. Prophets and preachers travelled throughout Israel proclaiming that the Messiah was coming, yet Israel was still under Roman control. Nathaniel was becoming cynical and discouraged"

And that is the reason for his question. What kind of person from Nazareth could answer the longing in his heart, give him the purpose, belonging, meaning that he needed?

Don't we feel like this especially now during this COVID 19 pandemic? We pray and ask God's intervention and it seems nothing happens and numbers are only rising

Sometimes, when we tell people to trust and believe that Jesus, will help and carry us through, we are met with scepticism or even rudeness and it can be really

discouraging. But Philip, was not put off, he persevered --- he didn't get into some theological debate about the merits of Nazareth as a place within the salvation history of Israel, he just said to Nathanael, "Come and see!"

My dear friends, part of our calling is not to give up but to continue share the good news with others and to encourage others, even if we are met with scepticism.

During this time of the COVID 19 pandemic let us invite people to

- Come and see how Jesus healed us when we was diagnosed COVID positive
- Come and see how Jesus has carried us through thus far, being unemployed because of the COVID 19 pandemic, -- and how we could still provide for our families.
- Come and see how God is walking with us though this time of bereavement as we have lost a loved one because of the COVID 19 pandemic.
- Come and see how God compassionately walked with us after we ended an abusive relationship
- (and the list go on)

However despite his cynical attitude Nathaniel went and in V 47 -48 we read ***"When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching he said of him here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false Nathaniel asked Jesus how do you know me? And Jesus answered "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Phillip called you***

Jesus greeted Nathaniel unexpectedly by speaking directly to what was most on his heart. Jesus immediately got past the distrust and smoke screen to encounter the core issue for Nathaniel. Jesus didn't play games, but penetrated to the yearning that Nathaniel felt most.

Jesus was saying to Nathaniel, "I know what's on your heart. I know you've been praying for the Messiah. I know you want God's kingdom to be restored."

And Nathaniel responded with simple faith and joy. He told Christ, "You are the Son of God, the King of Israel." His quick switch from doubt to earnestness indicates the depth to which Christ had touched him.

My dear friends Jesus not only knew Nathanael, Jesus not only knew the heart of Nathanael, the details of Nathanael's life. No Jesus knows your heart and my heart too. He knows everything about us. He knows our heartaches, our pain, our sorrow, our joy, our love, our fears. Our anxiety, and our worries

Jesus gets past our defences to speak to our longings. He reminds us that we were designed and created with dignity. We have been given talents and abilities that can be used for a purpose.

Conclusion

Jesus had never met Nathanael. But Jesus knew about him. He knew Nathanael's character and attitudes. Jesus knows everything about us too he knows we all have spiritual gifts and he calls us to use these spiritual gifts, especially now during this COVID 19 pandemic

We may be tempted to think sometimes that if we are not somehow out there doing extraordinary things like the frontline workers (doctors/ nurses/medical staff) and getting all sorts of attention for our work, that we are not really called by God.

I want to remind you even the smallest thing that you do for someone: like just sending a message to encourage someone/ to pick up the phone to ask someone how they are doing//offering to go buy someone's groceries//share your healing story with someone// It may seem insignificant but it means a lot to that person Remember the words of Mother Theresa "***we can do no great things. We can only do small things with great love. It is not how much you do; it is how much love you put into it –***