



**A** *GAIN* the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone. The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. (John 1:35-51)

**The First Sunday after The Epiphany.**

*The Collect.*

**O** *LORD*, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people who call upon thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought

to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

### **The Epiphany, or the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.**

[January 6.]

*The Collect.*

**O** GOD, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles; Mercifully grant that we, who know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ This Collect is to be said daily throughout the Octave

We will read today yet another beginning in the Book of John – the beginning of the formal ministry of Christ including the calling of the first disciples. John records these events some period of time after their transpiration. He seldom, if ever, claims identity for his writings, but is simply satisfied that the Lord knows of him. John would not be the kind of modern evangelist prevalent today who boasts of his OWN accomplishments in the work of the Lord. In fact, all works boasted of never reach the gates of Heaven.

*Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!* It is near certain that John was one of these disciples of the Baptist. Even after the years have passed by, John tenderly remembers every minute detail of this first occasion of his following Christ. Standing by the Banks of Jordan Waters with a man who has been a light to him thus far, he is now introduced to the Greater Light (Christ) to which the Lower Light (John the Baptist) directed him. Despite his great admiration and respect for his teacher of repentance, there could be no one as magnanimous and compassionate as His passing Lord – and John KNEW it! The Baptist withholds no mystery in pointing out Christ by His greatest pre-resurrection title – **the Lamb of God!**

*And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.* If the preacher is a preacher of righteousness, we shall always hear him speak of Christ. And ***faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.*** (Romans 10:17) Because John was a faithful preacher, he lost two fine disciples. How far they followed before Christ invited them to His home, is not given. But John pointed them to Christ and was glad to see them leave his mortal hands and find security in Hands that would never lose them. As clergy and lay people, we must remember that the following of Christ is always the purpose for which we preach and teach. It is far more important that our charges follow Christ than to follow us. Once we have revealed all of the Holy mysteries that have been given us, we should find solace in the fact that our students become masters of the Word in study and action (even if it means leaving our side and going on alone in following Christ). John remembers that day as if yesterday. He may have taken a surreptitious look back at his old teacher, but that was the last time John ever looked back!

*Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?* Why did Jesus turn about? Do you suppose for a single second that Christ, who made the hearts of these two men, did not also know what those hearts yearned for? He knows our hearts as well and He sees if we follow Him or some other. He asked, ***What seek ye?*** Notwithstanding the fact that Jesus knows precisely the yearnings of our hearts, He nevertheless gives space for us to express those yearnings as a child to a father. The father takes his beloved child into an ice cream parlor. The father knows full well that he will

purchase and ice cream for his child, but he waits for the child to plead for the desire of his heart. God is that way with us. Christ asks you and me, just as surely as He asked these two, *What seek ye?* Do we seek after Christ and His righteousness, or do we seek to follow our own path to Hell? Our answer to Christ's question makes all the difference in the world (and in Heaven).

*They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?* We do not ask total strangers where they live, do we? But John and Andrew (the other disciple) felt a strange affinity drawing them to Christ. Immediately, they recognized Him as Master. They desired to know where He dwelled for they desired to have company and fellowship with Him. Though they may not have remembered much that John the Baptist taught them, they remembered one thing as vividly as the morning sun – Jesus was the Lamb of God!

Now what was the response of the dear Lord to the compelling question of these two men who followed Him without fully knowing Him? *He saith unto them, Come and see.* Do you ever know of a time when Christ has turned any soul away from following Him? Of course not! *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* (John 6:37) If we will know the joy and blessings of Christ, we must first follow Him, and then we shall see greater glories than we ever imagined.

*They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.* See how promptly the seeker who comes to Christ is received as His family? John and Andrew this morning did not know Christ, but in the afternoon hours, they are LIVING with Christ! They fellowshiped all day with Christ until the tenth hour (4 PM) by the Jewish clock, and now they remained where He was. The believer always seeks to abide with Christ regardless the hour. We may wonder what teaching occurred during this sojourn of the two disciples, but one thing we know: it was sufficient to bind these two to Christ for the remainder of their lives, and beyond.

*One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.* Andrew was the first disciple who was moved to bring others to Christ of his family. Andrew is the disciple who reaches out to bring others to the company of Christ, so we named our Church in Alabama, St Andrew's Anglican Orthodox Church. We all should be like St. Andrew who went seeking his brother immediately upon his own finding of Christ. *He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.* What a painful tragedy, if we find Christ ourselves but find our own brothers and sisters absent in Heaven! Andrew was not about to allow that to happen... *And he brought him to Jesus!* Have you brought others of your loved ones to Christ, and then reached beyond family ties to friends and strangers? Note also the five words of Andrew that convinced his brother, Peter, to follow: *We have found the Messiah!* These were simple words spoken by a simple man, but it was enough to convince Peter to come. We do not need to peruse the dictionary for distinguished and sophisticated words with which to preach – simply tell them where to find Christ and that will do.

*And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.* Christ is our Rock, and the same which followed the children of Israel in the Wilderness. *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank*

*of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ.* (1 Cor 10:1-4) Note that they Children of Israel were baptized both with water and Spirit! They were drawn beneath the Sea level to dry ground, and the pillar of smoke by day and fire by night was the Holy Ghost under whose protection they found solace. Christ is the **Rock** and **Foundation** of the Church – not Peter. Peter is a STONE of the Church. Stones are particles chipped off from that great Rock whose substance is the same with the original ROCK! If we are stones for Christ, we bear His nature and likeness though in smaller example. The story is told of Michelangelo who found a large tone in the waste pile in a backyard – the failed evidence of another sculptors work to find beauty in the stone. Michelangelo took the stone and found his masterpiece, the Statue of David, there beneath the unhewn exterior of that castaway stone. Christ sees a David in our rough and unpolished countenance and fashions us into His own Creation.

*The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.* The Sovereign Will and working of the Lord is past our understanding. John and Andrew sought the Lord by following, but Jesus to Galilee and finds Philip whom He invites to follow. The invitation is simple and great. Simple for its two words – great for the cause of the One who spoke them. He still invites us today to follow Him. Some must diligently seek Christ before they find Him; others may be surprisingly found by Him and drawn to Him. *Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.* Bethsaida is a Chaldean term meaning **fishing house**. Christ usually seeks out people who are not vagrants, but who are working at a useful endeavor. That usefulness can be turned to a greater trade – **fishers of men**! Philip has the same eager heart as does Andrew, so he searches out Nathanael and invites him to come to Jesus. We find an example here of the incomplete knowledge of a disciple of Christ. He was diligent to go to Nathanael and make the invitation, but he misspoke in one particular – Christ is not the literal Son of Joseph but of God. Christ accepts us where we are in inviting us to follow. We will grow in wisdom and truth as we know Him more.

*And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* Nazareth was a notoriously poor city of Galilee. It had become a by-word among the people of Israel. Surely nothing good can come out of such a lowly place. Surely the King of Kings could not be born in a stable and bedded in a wooden manger! Philip does not argue the ridiculous, he simply knows his subject and he knows his subject will speak for itself! *Philip saith unto him, Come and see.* With Christ, seeing is believing. We see Christ all around us today, but do we recognize His countenance in the hopeless eyes of a poor orphan, or in the humble stoop of a widow left destitute. We better had. We do not have to prove Christ to any man. If we point Him out to them, Christ will prove Himself!

*Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* Yes, Jesus DID see Nathanael coming, but He saw Nathanael long before Nathanael ever followed Philip. He saw Him when he was being fashioned by God in his mother's womb. He spoke so familiarly to Nathanael that Nathanael perhaps thought Him overly familiar. *Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me?* There may have been an air of impertinence in Nathanael's retort, but, if so, the answer Christ gave cleared up any doubts Nathanael may have had hitherto. Just what was in the response of Jesus that opened Nathanael's eyes? *Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.* Such an answer might not have such an impact on you or me, but it did have on Nathanael. Why? It was the custom, and still is in Asia, for the mother to leave her baby in the shade of the

bordering fig trees while working in the fields. The fig tree has large branches and affords much shade. It is likely that Christ referred to having seen Nathanael there under the fig tree as a baby. Such a response would certainly have held meaning for Nathanael. Whatever was meant, it opened his eyes to Christ immediately. *Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.* This is the strongest testimony yet of a disciple of Christ – provoked by a reference to that fig tree!

*And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.* (John 1:35) Christ had given two proofs to Nathanael as to whom He was – He had told Nathanael of his character which Nathanael recognized as true. He then told Nathanael that He had seen Him where no other man could have seen him. But now Christ uses the emphatic term, *Verily, Verily* to inform Nathanael that he shall see a greater scene than even those two proofs – the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. Christ, like Jacob's Ladder, is the only means to ascend to Heaven. He was when Jacob had his vision; He was when Nathanael spoke with Him the first time, and He is now the only Way, Truth, and Life whereby men may be saved.

Are you?