

# Epiphany #2

1-17-2021

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Vicar Karen Pugatch

## Celebrate (Introduction)

“All are baptized have a calling in God’s world. God calls not just pastors and deacons but also the youngest child, like Samuel. The story of the calling of Nathanael plays with the ideas of place. Nathanael initially dismisses Jesus because he comes from Nazareth. But where we come from isn’t important; it’s where – rather whom- we come to. Jesus refers to Jacob, who had a vision in a place he called ‘the house of God, and... the gate of heaven’ (Gen. 28:17). Jesus says he himself is the place where Nathanael will meet God.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Opening Hymn:** [“Jesus Calls Us O’er the Tumult”](#)

## Psalm: 139:1-6 13-18

“O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me!

<sup>2</sup>Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up;  
thou discernest my thoughts from afar.

<sup>3</sup>Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,  
and art acquainted with all my ways.

<sup>4</sup>Even before a word is on my tongue,  
lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.

<sup>5</sup>Thou dost beset me behind and before,  
and layest thy hand upon me.

<sup>6</sup>Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is high, I cannot attain it.

<sup>13</sup>For thou didst form my inward parts,  
thou didst knit me together in my mother’s womb.

<sup>14</sup>I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful.<sup>[a]</sup>  
Wonderful are thy works!

Thou knowest me right well;

<sup>15</sup> my frame was not hidden from thee,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately wrought in the depths of the earth.

<sup>16</sup>Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance;  
in thy book were written, every one of them,  
the days that were formed for me,  
when as yet there was none of them.

<sup>17</sup>How precious to me are thy thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!

<sup>18</sup> If I would count them, they are more than the sand.  
When I awake, I am still with thee.”<sup>19</sup>

**Hymn of Praise:** [“Songs of Thankfulness and Praise”](#)

**Prayer of the Day**

“Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful redeemer, for the countless blessings and benefits you give. May we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day praising you, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:** [1 Samuel 3:1-20](#)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:** [1 Corinthians 6:12-20](#)

**The Gospel:** [John 1:43-51](#)

**Hymn of the Day:** [“Let Justice Flow Like Streams”](#)

The Message: ([Video Link](#))

Today’s Gospel lesson is very relevant to the crisis our nation is experiencing. It is found within John’s account of the calling of Philip and Nathanael, or Bartholomew, by Jesus to be His disciples. After Philip was called by Jesus, he then went to tell Nathanael that he had found the Messiah. “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.” This brought an immediate skeptical response from Nathanael, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Without hearing anything else like a logical explanation, what appears to be prejudice based upon ill-founded information or untruths came to life in Nathanael.

Prejudice was not new to the ancient Jews, just look how they treated the Samaritans and any gentile. But why was the small Jewish town of Nazareth the object of prejudice or at best negative biased thinking? It could have been that it had no mention in the prophets and was of no real importance in the Hebrew heritage. But more so, without fact, it was thought to be a small backwater town without the sophistication of larger historically noted towns. It was considered to be Hicksville. But this was most likely unfounded and not true. Recent archeology places Nazareth in very close proximity to the Roman built city of Tzappori (Sepphoris) and very near the major international north/south trade route. This would have meant that the residents of this small town would have been exposed to international culture. It would also have meant that many of the skilled workers in Nazareth may have work from time to time in the nearby Roman city. All of this would have meant some degree of sophistication in that nearby small town certainly more than being Hicksville.

It is apparent this candidate to become a disciple was prejudiced. He had preconceived negative reactions to anyone who lived in Nazareth. In his mind there was no way the Messiah could have come from there. We may forget that Jesus' disciples were human and had the same human attributes as we have even to being prejudiced. George Aiken, the late senator from Vermont once said, "If we were to wake up some morning and find that everyone was the same race, creed, and color, we would find some other cause for prejudice by noon."

Sadly this is a prevalent condition of humanity. Seemingly we must always have someone or something to look down upon in order to elevate ourselves. When prejudice overtakes one's life displaying itself in actions of hurting someone else this is the sign of the worst attributes of prejudice - hate and its bitter results. Make no mistake this is what we are experiencing at this very moment. Prejudice in the form of racism and blind nationalism has been fueled by lies and extremism in order for overt actions of hate to bring our society and nation to the brink of chaos and destruction. Although some may say this is about political differences, in reality it is the result of prejudice in the form of racism.

There is little doubt that during this past year we have come face to face with the ugly results of prejudice in the form of racism. Tragically prejudice in the form of racism has become ingrained into the very fabric of our lives and institutions and now has taken the form of sedition. This is our society and dark reality in which we find ourselves today.

The Rev Dr. Martin Luther King once stated this truthful, observation, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." This brings us back to the story of Nathanael. His comment of "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" was immediately recognized by Philip for what it was – an irrational prejudiced response. He knew that engaging in any kind of debate would most likely not lead to the conclusion of convincing Nathanael as to who this Jesus was. I think we all have experienced such debates. We soon discover that they are futile for they only put the other person on the defensive and they become governed by saving face word games. Prejudices are only overcome through experiences and not words. The noted New York minister Ralph W. Sockman once stated, "In overcoming prejudice, working together is more effective than talking together." This is saying that it is experiencing life together that changes attitudes and prejudices.

In the book "To Kill a Mocking Bird" Atticus Finch tells his son Scout, "First all, if you can learn a single trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... Until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." By allowing yourself to experience the other person's life you begin to understand them and to hopefully deal with any prejudice.

This is how Philip dealt with Nathanael in helping him get beyond his preconceived thoughts and prejudices. He did the simplest thing by asking him to "Come and see, I am not going to argue with you, Nathanael, just come and see for yourself. Allow yourself to experience being in the presence of this Nazarene, this Jesus."

To his credit Nathanael agreed to follow Philip to see for himself. When Jesus met Nathanael he greet him by saying, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit" Such a statement showed an insight which could only come from knowing who Nathanael was. Nathanael responded, "Where did you get to know me?" Furthermore, he must have thought "I have not known you, or would not have given any regards to you especially being from Nazareth." Jesus then replied, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." This was to indicate that Jesus knew Nathanael's life was lived as a devote Jew. It must be understood that during the heat of the day the devote Jew would often seek the shade of a tree to read the Torah and pray. This insight and to be able to cast aside Nathanael's ill-conceived prejudice, caused Nathanael to respond 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the king of Israel.'

John's account of this event gives us insight into how to deal not only with the prejudices which we may have but also with others who may be living a life full of hate do to ill-conceived prejudices. Philip's command of "Come and see" is a command to allow our lives to get beyond preconceived misguided thoughts and debilitating egos. It is a command that we bear witness to those who are overcome by hateful prejudice by being the living example of God's, love. In this way they may see and experience this love. Living this love does not mean that we must agree with the other person who may be filled with hate but it does mean we are to continue to be that shining example of love which is our only hope for the future. Love demands that we denounce the evil and hate that which has so consumed this nation while not falling prey to hate's evil's tentacles.

Sadly, there are false prophets who are giving credence to prejudice, hate, and sedition in the name of Christ. This is not the Christ who called Philip and Nathanael and who calls us each day to love and care for our fellow human beings, the children of God. We must never waiver from the truth of God's message through Jesus. We must never let lies become accepted truths for that lead us to certain death and destruction.

Now is the time to be renewed in God's call to love and reaffirm this call as the prophet of old responded, "Here I am, send me!" This is definitely the time in which we need to let it be known who we are by the love which we proclaim and live. This living witness rejects the evil and hate which is beginning to test our very soul as individuals and as a nation. With this stand let us be strengthened and comforted in Jesus' words, "I am with you always, to the end of the age."

**Anthem:** ["Song of Peace"](#) Agne G.

**Offering\*:** ([On-Line Giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

## **The Prayer**

Lord God throughout all ages your guiding hand has been with your children when they have been amidst the evil activities of their fellowman. We now need your presence to give us the strength to overcome the turmoil which is all too real and threatening to our nation and life. May your love enter those whose hate drives their lives. May we also be renewed in living as your followers of love and peace. May our minds be cleared of any false inclinations so we may know what is truth and what is fiction.

During this time of the rapidly spreading deadly virus give strength to those who are caring for the sick and dying. Give us the perseverance to make the sacrifices in order to help curtail its spreading devastation. May we find ways in helping those who are affected economically.

We pray for all whole need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elfei family, Betty Fultz, Katie Hawkins, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

**The Lord's Prayer:** [The Mormon Tabernacle Choir](#)

## **The Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

**Closing Hymn:** ["O Master Let Me Walk With Thee"](#)

We are discontinuing in person worship services on Sundays until further notice. The online worship experiences will continue as well as the Midweek Thoughts.

Bible Study with Vicar Karen Pugatch, Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30 PM more information attached below.

\*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill

10274 Raleigh Tavern Road

Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church

9122 Sybert Drive

Columbia Hills

Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: [https://tithe.ly/give\\_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291](https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291)