

SERMON: JOHN 1 : 35 – 51
HOW COMFORT FROM JESUS IS FOUND

- A. JESUS FINDS YOU and YOU “FIND” JESUS
 B. YOU FIND OTHERS and OTHERS “FIND” JESUS

Again, the next day, John [the Baptist] stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone).

The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these. And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

Life is a lot like daydreaming. One thing leads to another, and to another, and to another. Sometimes the littlest things lead to great changes in life. The same is true with the spread of the Gospel (the Good News) of forgiveness, resurrection, and eternal life in Jesus. How is it that you are right here today in your Christianity? Were you brought to faith in Jesus our Savior as an adult? How did that take place? I'm sure the sequence is unique and interesting. Has your family and have your forefathers been in the flock of Christ for centuries? How did the very beginning of that chain of events happen? How did it stay intact? Just as unique and interesting. This morning we see the very same truth in action as Jesus gathers five of His twelve disciples. “Disciples” means “students.”

Two of these first five had been disciples of John the Baptist. Surely their consciences had led them to know that they needed help, help from the Lord. They needed “rightness” before God, and they knew they could not provide it on their own—distressing! John's word, “Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins” brought them comfort. John pointed them to the presence of the Lord Himself. In the verses prior to our text, John the Baptist saw Jesus walking among the crowd, and John proclaimed “Behold! Look! The ‘lamb’ of God who takes away the sin of the world!” In the Old Testament lambs were sacrificed for sin. John says Jesus was the lamb who had come from God as God's appointed sacrifice to take away man's sin; that is, to make peace for man with God. This news comforted and soothed the hearts of these two men. The next day, when Jesus was in the crowd again, our text says John re-stated, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” These two disciples of John wanted to be closer to such comfort and peace, forgiveness and salvation! They followed Jesus. Jesus knew they were there. He turned to them and asked what they were seeking, and Jesus already knew the answer. They were sinners in search of comfort and peace with the Father. Jesus did not ignore or hurry away from these sinners and their need for forgiveness and life. Likewise He does not turn away from you. What are YOU seeking? He is listening and will supply you especially with the most important need of all—comfort in the face of the failure of sin. Jesus cares. The two answered, respectfully calling Him “Rabbi” or “Teacher”; for He had the Truths that they could not grasp for themselves. They continued, “Where are You staying?”—which seems like a strange request at this point. The question is not all that different from asking someone, “What time are you home?” You ask because you want to visit with the person. Jesus' response was, “Come and see!” Not tomorrow, not next week; but right now! Jesus is interested in you also, right now! His ears are open to your prayers, and your issues. He wants to shower comfort upon you—not the ease of life, but comfort for your soul. Peace even against death and the grave—all caused by sin.

The two men spent the day with Jesus. The text says “it was about the tenth hour. Whether that was the time their visit started or ended is not stated. Depending on which time-keeping system is being used, it could have been either 10:00 in the morning or 4:00 in the afternoon. At any rate, they spent the day with Jesus. They did not hurry off after just getting a taste of things—because they only had so much time with packed schedules. This was important. Your time with your Savior is important too. He provides the comfort that sinners need. Do you get angry with your closest ones? Have you bad-mouthed the one you see as your rival? Have you wasted your wealth on foolish get rich quick schemes? Do you find fault with everyone but yourself? Give up on self, find comfort in Jesus.

The text tells us that one of these two men was Andrew. Andrew was a commercial fisherman—likely rugged and tough. Andrew, relieved and comforted, had to tell his brother Simon! “We have found the Messiah / the Christ”—that is, the Anointed and Appointed One—the one Appointed to rescue us from ourselves and our sin. “We have found the Christ, Andrew said. Actually, the Christ had found him! It’s like the youngster separated from Mom in a big store. She is looking for him frantically and sees him long before he sees her. When she gets close, he says with glee, “Mom, I found you!” We do talk that way, but remember it’s Jesus who finds us to comfort and to soothe us. Andrew then “took” his brother to Jesus. Andrew didn’t just say, “You should go see Him.” He took him! Don’t just tell your children about coming to church, bring them! The same is true of others with whom you have spoken of the Savior and the saving message of the Word of God. Bring them. Jesus received Simon warmly. He already knew him. He announced a name change. “Simon” would now be “Cephas” or “Peter”—that is, “the Stone.” Simon was strong as a stone in his personality. By the Lord’s doing he would become strong in his childlike faith in Christ. Jesus likewise knows all about you, and sends what is just right for you in life. Peter’s initial contact with the Savior is traced through John the Baptist pointing Andrew to the Lamb of God, Andrew visiting Jesus, and Andrew telling and taking his brother Simon to see and hear Jesus. Peter had found comfort in Jesus. The same is true for you.

On the next day, Jesus went to Galilee to find Philip—deliberately. Nothing is by chance or by accident in Jesus’ Kingdom, although it may seem that way to us. Likewise Jesus has deliberately brought you into His Church of all believers of all time. This man Philip was from Bethsaida, which was also the hometown of Andrew and Simon Peter. Likely Philip already knew them. Perhaps Andrew and Peter spoke with Philip right then and there about the comfort and relief that Jesus, the Savior brings. The Savior invited Philip, “Follow Me”—which he did. Comfort in Christ is the greatest treasure of all!

Philip then told Nathanael. Thus the Good News of Jesus spreads from one to the next. It’s likely Nathanael was Philip’s good friend. Those who are most important to an individual are the first to be contacted with good news! Have you brought your friend, your husband, your wife into the Christian Church? It is indeed a priority to share the Gospel of Jesus with those who are most important to you.

Philip told his friend Nathanael that they had found the one promised in the Old Testament by Moses and the Prophets—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. (You and I know that Jesus of Nazareth was really Jesus of Bethlehem, although Nazareth is where He grew up. You and I also know that Jesus was not the “birth son” of Joseph. Joseph was His loving adoptive father. The Bible says the Holy Spirit engendered life within Mary.) Nathanael had reservations about Philip’s message. “Nazareth?”—the little nothing-town? Philip did not “force” or “coerce” Nathanael, but simply said, “Come and see!” One cannot force another to come to faith in Jesus. Let the Word of God—with its, yes, bitter message of sin and death, but also with its uplifting and overriding message of forgiveness and life in Jesus!—work in their hearts. Invite them to the Word. Offer to study it with them. “Come and see!” Jesus knew all about Nathanael. He described Nathanael as “a true Israelite, in whom is no deceit.” Nathanael was not just an Israelite in name only, or one who rejected the promises of a Savior as given by Moses and the Prophets. He was looking for the Promised One. He was not playing a game to further his own interests. He was not interested in self-grandeur and in deceiving people to get it. His interest was the Lord. Nathanael was astonished to know that that Jesus of Nazareth knew all about him, even his sitting under the fig tree. He boldly confessed Jesus to be the “Son of God and the King of Israel”—king of spiritual Israel, all the church of God. Jesus told Nathanael that Nathanael would indeed see more convincing proofs than this; for in Jesus the gates of heaven would be opened for direct access to the Father! This is what Jacob in the Old Testament had seen in his dream many years earlier—a ladder or stairway to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it. In Christ, God’s heart is open. Comfort indeed—comfort from John the Baptist for Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael—all through Jesus!

But who was the other man, fifth man, the one with Andrew that very first day when Andrew went to visit Jesus? His name is not given, but it could very well be John, the same John who wrote this Gospel from which our text comes! He was a fisherman with Andrew and Peter. He never mentions himself by name in his Gospel record. Through John, you too receive comfort in Christ for your heart. What a unique and interesting chain of events by which the Good News of Jesus comes even to you, this very day. Comfort and salvation in Christ! The growth of the Kingdom of Salvation moves from one to another like the trains of thought daydream!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach--