

## **John 1:45-46 Come and See! Mission Festival September 25, 2016**

By Pastor Kenneth Mellon, Trinity Lutheran Church and School, Pleasant Valley Rd., West Bend, WI

Our gracious God and Father is at peace with you through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Amen.

God's Word describing Jesus as the Savior for all people is written John 1:45-46.

These are Your words heavenly Father. Help us to better see Jesus through Your truth. Your Word is truth.

Dear Redeemed in Christ, the Savior of the World,

Do you ever find it difficult to talk about the Savior? You're afraid to say something which makes a person angry or a person may ask questions that you can't answer. Sometimes it just doesn't seem the right time to speak. Also, do you ever find it difficult to support mission work? You see the needs your own family and church and it's hard to go beyond. Our verses give encouragement for missions and to help us speak to people. Let's see from Philip after he met Jesus that he immediately went to his friend and said,

### **Come and See Jesus!**

**First, he knew where his friend was at.** Nathanael hadn't been with Philip when he met Jesus. But, Nathanael had a bigger problem than being a distance away. He was skeptical about who Jesus was. Philip told him, *"We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."* *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"* (v.45-46) Nathaniel thought he knew the Bible. Nazareth had not been listed in His Old Testament that a Savior would come from there. But, the area of Galilee was described in Isaiah 9 that the people in darkness would see a great light in the coming Savior. Nathaniel was like so many people today who have a little knowledge of God and religion and think that is enough of what they need, so they don't want to listen to more.

Nathanael had questions that God did not specifically answer. Why would God choose Nazareth instead of Jerusalem with its temple and capital? Why would God wait until Jesus was 30 years old before introducing Him as the Savior of Israel? Why wasn't He more popular if He was such a great person? There had been others before who claimed to be the Savior, how could Philip be so sure this was truly the one? Philip could have argued with him. He could have said, "Nathanael, I am not lying. I have not been fooled! Jesus is for real!" But Philip's arguing alone was not to give Nathanael certainty. Only Jesus could.

There was another potential problem. God's ways are different than our ways. God said in Isaiah 55, *"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."* (v. 8-9)

When Nathanael came to Jesus he could have turned away and left before talking to Him because of Jesus' humble appearance. Many people today do not understand Jesus. They have expectations for Him: like helping them get out of financial problems or bringing healing to someone they love. People put conditions on God that He doesn't promise to do in His Word and then they blame God for failing them. Other people are satisfied with a few moral stories from the Bible so they think that they know of Jesus and that is enough. I read a recent survey of why many people who called themselves Christians are no longer worshiping in church. Some were turned away by hurtful actions of Christians, but many left the church after they went to college and were taught that no logical person believes in God, at least not the God of the Bible. In the end, they lost their faith and would not want to come to see Jesus.

If so many people in the world have this negative mindset like Nathaniel against the good news of Jesus, why does our synod start new home missions and foreign missions where we know that many people will not believe? Are we wasting money and prayers to support such mission efforts? We may wonder if it will do any good to reach out in our own area where 33% of the people are described as unchurched or not believing. Jesus said that in the last times because of *increased wickedness the love of many will grow cold.*

**Second, God can work changes.** A minute ago I read Isaiah which stated that people can't understand God's ways on their own. But, God went on to promise in Isaiah 55, "*As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish... so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*" (v.10-11) We were once stubborn unbelievers by birth. God went out of His way through His Word to bring us to faith in Jesus. Now, when we speak God's Word people can be changed. Philip said, "*Come and see.*" And when Nathanael came, Jesus said, "*Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.*" "*How do you know me?*" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "*I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.*" Then Nathanael declared, "*Rabbi (teacher), you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.*" (v.47-49)

Jesus revealed that He knew what Nathanael was thinking and all that he had done. Jesus knew that he longed for a coming Savior. As Christians we have that same longing. We realize that without God's Word we will lose our faith. So, we come to receive Christ's forgiveness in Word and Sacrament. We are not just Christians an hour a week. We pray and have devotions daily. We call on His name in praise. Jesus was joyful that Nathanael believed and confessed his faith that He was the *Son of God.*" (v.49)

Jesus said, "*You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.*" He then added, "*I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open.*" (v.50) There are two important things. One is that Jesus promised that he would see heaven. When he died in the true faith he would see Jesus on the throne surrounded by angels. But, He was also telling him that by seeing Jesus now, he was seeing the Father in heaven. (*John 14:9*) So for us, through Jesus, heaven has been opened, not just for a moment like when He was transfigured. In Christ, heaven is open to us always. This is the message that we are to believe and confess to people near and far. Jesus has opened paradise. We have God's sure Word!

It clearly tells us that Jesus, the God and man in one person, came to save us! While on this earth He was as a perfect man in a sinful world. As we look to Him in faith, we will receive what Jesus won for all. His death on a cross paid to forgive all our sins. He became the way that connects us to God. He promised, "*The Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.*" (*John 3:14-15*) People don't need to climb to God by their works to get to heaven. Jesus is the mediator between heaven and a sinful world. We have fellowship with God through Him.

The other day, I was eating at a restaurant and a stranger came up to me to say that a store was having a super sale on everything in it. He was so excited he had to tell someone, even if it was a stranger. We have greater news to tell friends and strangers: "Come and see the Savior!" With joy, we will support mission work in our country and in the world. By the power of the Holy Spirit people will hear of Christ will believe. Let us keep praying for those who don't know. Many are still lost and without hope. We can tell them the truth. We can invite them to church, Sunday School, Bible Class, or share a Meditations book. Through these and by our prayers and offerings for missions we are saying, "Come and see Jesus!" Amen.