



Introduction

All the 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 idea of place. Nathanael initially dismisses Jesus because he comes from Nazareth. But where we come from isn't important; it's where—or 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.

Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father, and of the ✙ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of ✙ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn ELW # 676 / LBW # 403

Lord, Speak to Us, That We May Speak

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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.**

First Reading: 1 Samuel 3:1-20

At a time when visions are rare and unexpected, the LORD comes to Samuel and calls him to speak the divine word. Though just a boy, Samuel responds to God obediently, as Eli the priest has taught him to respond. This marks the beginning of Samuel's prophetic ministry.

Read the text [here](#).

Psalmody: Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

¹LORD, you have searched me out; O LORD, you have known me.

²**You know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.**

³You trace my journeys and my resting-places
and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴**Indeed, there is not a word on my lips,
but you, O LORD, know it altogether.**

⁵You encompass me, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

⁶**Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain to it.**

¹³For you yourself created my inmost parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴**I will thank you because I am marvelously made;
your works are wonderful, and I know it well.**

¹⁵My body was not hidden from you,
while I was being made in secret and woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶**Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb;
all of them were written in your book;
my days were fashioned before they came to be.**

¹⁷How deep I find your thoughts, O God!
How great is the sum of them!

¹⁸**If I were to count them, they would be more in number than the sand;
to count them all, my life span would need to be like yours.**

Gospel: John 1:43-51

In John's gospel, Jesus' ministry begins with the call of disciples, who then bring others to Jesus. Philip's friend Nathanael moves from skepticism to faith when he accepts the invitation to "Come and see."

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

How long has it been since you played Tag or Follow the Leader or even a game of Telephone? Was it with your children or grandchildren, or with your own friends when you were much younger? When I read this passage, I am reminded of a great game that seems like a combination of all three!

In the passage just before what we read today, after Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist (not to be confused with the writer of this gospel) in the Jordan River, some of John's followers see Jesus walk by and they begin to follow him. When Jesus turns around and sees them, they ask where he is staying and he simply says, "Come and see." And they follow him and stay with him. One of them was Peter's brother, Andrew. He tells Peter that he has found the Messiah and invites him to come along.

In today's passage we read about what happened the next day. Jesus saw Phillip and called out to him to follow. And along the way, Phillip found Nathanael and called out to tell him that he and Andrew and Peter had found the Messiah. Phillip, repeating Jesus' words, tells Nathanael to "Come and see."

Nathanael is skeptical at first, when he learns that Jesus is from Nazareth. His response, which may sound snarky to us, is genuine. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" he asks.

We may think that he is dismissing Nazareth as an evil place or just as a small, unimportant place. But there is a deeper reason for his question. Many places, near and far, are named in the Old Testament, from the city of Jerusalem to the small town of Bethlehem.

Nazareth, which is now a sizeable city, was indeed just a small village then. More importantly to Nathanael – it was never mentioned in the Old Testament. So he could logically assume that nothing good – or at least no one important – would ever come from there!

But in spite of his doubts, Nathanael followed his friend to see Jesus.

The center of this text is the conversation between Jesus and Nathanael. Jesus, with his divine power, immediately knows Nathanael even better than Nathanael's friends do. He knows and declares that Nathanael is a Jew – one of God's chosen people of Israel – who is genuine in his words and his faith.

Poor Nate is startled and asks Jesus, “How do you know me?” Jesus is able to tell Nathanael where he was when Philip found him. Maybe knowing where he was is just a part of the story. Maybe Jesus knew and could tell him more about what he was doing or thinking or even praying. At any rate, Nathanael immediately declared that this rabbi – this holy teacher he had just met – is the Son of God, the King of Israel.

And Jesus, sounding slightly surprised by Nathanael’s sudden declaration of faith, promises him that he will see far greater things as he follows Jesus in faith.

It might surprise us to know that besides this passage, Nathanael is not mentioned again in John’s gospel until AFTER Jesus’s resurrection. He must have followed Jesus through his ministry along with the other apostles. He must have heard Jesus teach and witnessed his many miracles. He must have dined with them at the Last Supper and huddled with them in the Upper Room after Jesus’ crucifixion, because he is gathered with them again, when John tells us that Jesus appeared to the apostles (and names Nathanael among those present) on the lakeshore. And then Nathanael is not mentioned again in scripture.

But Nathanael joined the disciples who followed Jesus after this holy moment when one friend called out to another, tagging them; calling out to them with Jesus’ own words “Come and see”; so that they might come and follow this one true leader, Jesus Christ.

As I ponder how this text speaks to us today, I am reminded that at some point, someone invited us to come to church or Sunday school or a bible study and welcomed us as we saw Jesus for the first time. In our baptism, God the Father tagged us and called us by name too. And we continue to this day to use the same words that Jesus taught us, to invite others and to pray.

The invitation for us in this text is to continue that holy game. Even in this trying time; maybe especially in this pandemic of illness and unrest. This is the perfect time to invite others to watch our worship videos or drive-in for worship. To join us on Zoom for Sunday school and prayer time; for bible study and book discussions.

Even those who think they already know about Jesus might come and see him in a new way right now, and declare for the first time that he is truly the King of their lives and the Savior we all need.

Let’s join in this holy game of invitation, to see who the Spirit leads us to tag; to invite them to follow Jesus, the true leader of our lives; and to share with them the Father’s words of welcome and love. Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW # 696 / LBW # 494 *Jesus Calls Us; o'er the Tumult*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

A brief silence.

For the body of Christ gathered throughout the world and for all servants of the gospel, that following Jesus, the church lives out its calling every day, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For the well-being of creation, for plants and animals, and for all that God has marvelously made, that we serve as wise stewards of Earth, our home, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For police officers and firefighters, for attorneys and paralegals, for peacekeepers and military personnel, and for the leaders of governments, that they provide protection to all people, especially the most vulnerable, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For those lacking food or shelter, for those who are sick or grieving, and for those who are imprisoned or homebound, especially those we name now. May God console all who suffer, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For the life, vision, and sacrifice of Martin Luther King, Jr. and all those who have worked tirelessly and at great personal risk throughout history for justice, peace, freedom and equality for all people, especially the oppressed and poor, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

In thanksgiving for the saints who have gone before us, that their lives give us a vision of the gospel in action, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

Closing Hymn ELW # 685 / LBW 406 *Take My Life, That I May Be*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ruth Ann Sipe