

**1 Samuel 3:1-20****John 1:43-51****Introduction**

John started his Gospel, his good news about Jesus by saying 'In the beginning was the Word' – and it is our language ability, our words and especially our intention to communicate that makes us unique amongst God's creatures. Hardly surprising then, that Jesus' call to 'follow me' is spread through word of mouth; one follower seeking out a friend and passing the message on.

Sometimes it is hard to keep good news to yourself. It is infectious – you want to share it. Jesus was the bringer of good news – that's what the word 'gospel' means. We've heard how some – such as Philip – couldn't wait to find and tell someone else, He was so excited by meeting Jesus that he just had to share the experience with his friends. On the other hand Nathanael – was more sceptical. He wasn't going to take Philip's news at face value. He had no good opinion of Nazareth and expressed it by saying; "Nazareth, Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

It wasn't until Nathaniel actually met Jesus that his opinion changed. This can so often be the case. Our opinion of God, or faith or religion is coloured by our life experience and it isn't until we actually have an encounter with God – maybe we pray for something and the prayer is answered or something suddenly becomes clear to us in a new way that we begin to see God as he really is.

As Christians, we are called to share the good news of Jesus, sometimes in unexpected settings and situations. The question is: will we? Are we willing, like Philip, to say to other people, 'come and see. - come

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and find out for yourself. Listen to what I have to say but come and find out for yourself.

Sometimes God calls people but they don't know it is him calling them and they need someone else to help them know what is happening. This is what happened in our first reading. The boy Samuel served God in the Temple and loved him but didn't recognise his voice. When God spoke to him he needed Eli to realise it was God that Samuel was hearing and to tell him how to respond.

Often people aren't aware that God is calling them and need us to help them hear his invitation.

John Stott tells a story of how years ago he taught on this passage and quite a lot of John's Gospel in the Children's Church they were running at All Soul's, Langham Place. At the end of the term they set an exam paper to find out what the children had learned. Amongst the factual questions they added one that said, "Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, Philip brought Nathaniel, who have you brought? One little girl called Jilly wrote "I brought myself" ..... .... And she is right. We cannot bring others to Jesus unless we have brought ourselves to him and experienced his love and forgiveness for ourselves.

William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury during the war, said this, "It is futile to say 'go to the cross' we've got to be able to say, 'come to the cross' and there are only two voices that can issue that invitation. One is the voice of the sinless redeemer with which we cannot

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speak and the other is the voice of the forgiven sinner who knows himself forgiven - and that is our part."

So in coming to faith in Jesus Christ we need the testimony of those who know Jesus and know his presence in their daily lives and we need to experience him, his love and forgiveness for ourselves. But for a life of faith that is not enough. Something else is needed. We need to allow him to change us.

Our faith needs to be living and growing and changing us. If we base our Christian lives on an experience of Jesus at one point in time and simply look back and remember it we will not grow as Christians. More than that our faith will be empty and will shrivel and eventually die. Our faith in Christ has to be based on an ongoing experience of him and of how he is changing us. There's no point in looking back to good times when we really experienced God working in our lives and in our church. We have to be looking to see where he is working now and allow him to use us and work through us in that way.

Jesus talked about change when he met Peter and Nathaniel. He changed Peter's name to describe who he would become - a rock. He told Nathaniel that his outlook would change, his horizons would be made bigger. From someone who could see no good coming out of Nazareth his encounter with Jesus would enable him to see heaven opened.

Meeting Jesus changes us. It offers us a chance to be transformed, to have a new purpose and a new

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reference point. Responding to God's call to him changed Samuel from a young boy to a respected prophet who was able to give God's message to the people he lived amongst.

Meeting Jesus transformed the life of his disciples but it wasn't easy. They needed courage and determination to go with his and to remain faithful to him when things got difficult. They needed trust when they didn't understand things and they had to leave behind many things that were important to them. Not everyone who Jesus called went with him and that is a decision each of us has to make when we feel God's call upon our lives. But we also need to be ready to point people to Jesus and make them aware that he is calling them as well. Imagine what Peter would have missed if Andrew hadn't taken him to Jesus. What would Nathaniel's life had been if Philip hadn't told him about Jesus calling him to follow him.