

JESUS CHOOSES HIS DISCIPLES WITH THE WORDS: **FOLLOW ME**. HE MAKES HIS EPIPHANY TO THE BOYS AND THEY ARE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE HIM AS GOD'S SON, AS THE CHRIST, AND AS THEIR DIVINE KING.

PHILIP SAYS TO NATHANAEL, AKA BARTHOLOMEW - SON OF TALMAI: **WE FOUND THE ONE MOSES, THE LAW, AND PROPHETS WROTE OF - JESUS OF NAZARETH**. IN TRUTH, IT'S JESUS WHO FINDS BOTH PHILIP AND NATHANAEL.

IT'S ALWAYS THAT WAY; GOD INFORMS AND AUTHORS FAITH. JESUS CHOOSES EVERY BELIEVER AND HE SHARES HIS MINISTRY WITH US. HE CALLS SOME TO ADMINISTER HIS WORD AND SACRAMENTS AND SOME TO SPREAD HIS TRUTH, LOVE AND PEACE IN DAILY LIFE. WE CAN RECOGNIZE HIS GIFTS; OFTEN, WE JUST GET OUT OF THE WAY SO HE CAN USE US AS HE INTENDS.

ONE OF THE FIRST BOOKS I REMEMBER READING WAS 'FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON.' IN IT, CHARLIE, A VERY LOW IQ FACTORY FLOOR SWEEPER, IS THE BRUNT OF CRUEL JOKES. HE IS SELECTED FOR AN EXPERIMENT TO INCREASE HIS INTELLECT THROUGH AN OPERATION ALREADY PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY ON A RAT, ALGERNON. CHARLIE'S IQ SKYROCKETS.

ONE DAY, HE SEES A MENTALLY CHALLENGED RESTAURANT WORKER DROP SOME DISHES. THE MANAGER CALLS HIM A RETARD AND THE CUSTOMERS LAUGH AT HIM. IT MOVES CHARLIE TO HELP OTHER MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PEOPLE TO INCREASE THEIR IQ'S. HE USES HIS GIFT TO SERVE HIS PEOPLE.

FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST SERVE LIKE CHARLIE. JESUS USES OUR PAST EXPERIENCE, GIFTS AND PASSION TO CARE FOR THOSE WE RELATE TO. AS WE DO, THERE'S USUALLY AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS.

FEEL UNQUALIFIED? CHRIST CHOOSES A RAG-TAG BAND OF DISCIPLES, WITH NO OBVIOUS CREDENTIALS. THAT'S GRACE! WE'RE NOT QUALIFIED TO REPRESENT HIM; NOR ARE WE WORTHY TO BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD! HE ADOPTS US INTO HIS FAMILY AND THEN, COMFORTS HEARTS AND CHANGES MINDS THROUGH US.

WE WOBBLE BETWEEN APATHETIC AND STUBBORN, YET HE LOVES US. JUST AS JESUS TAKES OUR IMPERFECTION TO THE CROSS, HE USES OUR FLAWS ALONG WITH OUR TALENTS FOR HIS KINGDOM; HE IS, AFTER ALL, ABOUT FORGIVENESS.

LUTHER CALLED US TO DAILY REPENTANCE AND RESURRECTION - THAT'S REMEMBERING OUR BAPTISM. WE DIE TO SIN AND RISE TO ETERNAL LIFE DAILY, ON ACCOUNT OF OUR PARTICIPATION IN CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

NOT A ONE OF US IS A BARGAIN FOR GOD. WHAT A DELIGHTFUL SURPRISE TO BE VALUED AND UTILIZED BY THE SON OF GOD. CHRIST MAKES ETERNITY OUT OF OUR TEMPORAL SERVICE. HE WEAVES US INTO HIS IMMORTAL KINGDOM.

NATHANAEL IS AS MESSED UP AS US; HE DISSES JESUS BY MOCKING THE IDEA OF A MESSIAH FROM LOW IQ NAZARETH. YET, JESUS SAYS OF HIM: **BEHOLD AN ISRAELITE IN WHOM THERE IS NO GUILE**. JESUS KNOWS HE'S NOT DECEITFUL. HE'S A WEE BIT JUDGMENTAL; BUT HIS HEART IS SINCERE.

2      OUR TIMES ARE VERY MUCH LIKE JESUS' DAY. PEOPLE DON'T JUST LIVE CONTRARY TO GOD'S WORD; THEY HATE IT! HOW CAN WE NOT BE JUDGMENTAL! SO, WE SAY WHAT COMES TO MIND AND IT CAN BE ABRASIVE; SOMETIMES WE CAN EVEN BE WRONG...LIKE NATHANAEL.

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO BE WITHOUT GUILF, THOUGH? WOULDN'T IT BE SWEET TO BE WISE OR HUMBLE OR HAVE ANY GOD-GIVEN ATTRIBUTE? HEH, DON'T BUST YOUR BRAIN TRYING TO FIGURE OUT YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES; JESUS ALREADY KNOWS THEM. AND, WHILE YOU'RE WONDERING WHY HE ISN'T HELPING YOU WITH YOUR PLANS, HE'S ACTUALLY FITTING YOU INTO HIS PLAN.

JESUS DOESN'T ASK FOR ANY OATH OF LOYALTY FROM THE DISCIPLES AND HE DOESN'T PROMISE ANY PAY. HE SAYS: *FOLLOW ME*, AND THEY FOLLOW. CHRIST TELLS BARTHOLOMEW THAT HE'LL SEE GOD'S ANGELS ASCENDING AND DESCENDING ON THE SON OF MAN. THAT'S PAY ENOUGH, EH!

YOU HAVE BEEN BOUGHT WITH A PRICE AND THE PRICE WAS THE BODY AND SOUL OF JESUS. YOU HAVE LIFE WITH HIM IN EVERLASTING GLORY! YOU GLORIFY HIM NOW WITH YOUR BODY, HIS TEMPLE. YOUR EVERY EFFORT AT SHOWING JESUS OFF IS LIKE PHILIP'S *COME AND SEE* OR ELI'S ADVICE TO SAMUEL: *GO AND LISTEN!*

HE KNOWS EXACTLY WHO HE'LL IMPACT THROUGH YOU, AND WHEN! YOU HAVE NO IDEA OF HOW OFTEN HE HAS, OR WILL USE YOU. THAT'S A HUGE UP-SIDE TO FOLLOWING JESUS; YOU DON'T HAVE TO COME UP WITH ANYTHING ON YOUR OWN; YOU CAN JUST BE YOUR FORGIVEN SELF.

YOU JUST FOLLOW HIM AND SHOW HIM TO OTHERS BY YOUR ACTIONS AND WORDS, SO THEY CAN BE IN ON IT. WHAT BETTER GIFT CAN YOU GIVE THAN TO AID SOMEONE IN SEEING JESUS, THE VERY SON OF GOD! WHAT MORE MEANING CAN BE EXPERIENCED IN LIFE THAN TO INTRODUCE SOMEONE TO THE KING OF LOVE?

JESUS KNOWS WHEN YOU'RE UNDER THE FIG TREE AND HE IS TAKING YOU TO A PLACE WHERE YOU'LL EAT FROM THE TREE OF LIFE FOREVER. THAT TREE OF LIFE IS SERVED UP HERE IN A FEAST OF EVERLASTING BREAD AND WINE.

COME AND SEE!

MAY THE PEACE WHICH SURPASSES UNDERSTANDING GUARD YOUR HEART AND MIND THROUGH CHRIST JESUS. AMEN