

**January 17, 2021**

This lectionary year we are focusing on the gospel of Mark, but because it's short, we will also have many readings from John... One of the recurring themes in John has to do with looking and seeing. Remember the symbol of the eagle and seeing the big picture... Chapter after chapter, the gospel of John seems to say, "Look... look... Look at Jesus..."

In our reading today, Philip says to Nathaniel: "Come and see." Three words which are the foundation of all evangelism.

Couple little stories today... I remember the day my daughter, Jo was born, my heart grew three times bigger. That was the day I fell head over heels in love. That evening we started making phone calls, I couldn't wait to tell everyone. I remember calling my mom. I said, "You can't imagine how beautiful she is-- *Come and see!*"

We talk a lot about love in the church, love has this way of spilling out in abundance... Love is what leads to that *Come and See!* It has to be shared...

Sometimes, like Nathaniel, we see things instantly and clearly. But unfortunately, that's not always the case... Sometimes we really have to look hard... It can be a struggle. And sometimes it's not only in "what" we look at, but also in "how" we look. Do we look with our head? Or do we look with our heart? The gospel of John knows this, and that's why he beats the drum, "look... look... look at Jesus."

An interesting thing about an epiphany is that it usually happens in the context of struggling with something; a question perhaps. How do they do that? What's that about? What's the meaning of it? How does that work? And it seems that when the dots come together, there's a love for the truth...

Another story... When I was in college I majored in Sociology. I was always fascinated with the fact that people behave differently when they are in a group than as individuals. Social dynamics exert forces on people that change how they act.

Frenchman, Émile Durkheim is credited with being modern pioneer of Sociology in the late 1800's and early 1900's. He advocated for scientific methods that would explain phenomena attributed to society, rather than being limited to the actions of individuals.

When I was in college, I remember one particular class on the holocaust, and we kept asking, how could these supposedly good people do these things? How could these people systematically kill people during the day, and go home and kiss their wives at night like nothing happened? The question, and the lack of answers always haunted me. I kind of came to the conclusion it must have been some kind of evil, and you just couldn't fully explain it...

It wasn't until I was in Seminary that I came across Rene Girard, another scholar and Frenchman who articulated a theory of Human Desire or covetousness, leading to Rivalry and leading to Scapegoating. Which of course is the finger pointing and the violence of expelling and killing and sacrificing. Exactly what was happening to the Jewish people...

And Girard's theories, explained a lot for me... They answered a lot of questions I had struggled and wondered about. Reading Girard for me, was like opening my mind. And I have to be honest, whenever I'm with someone that I think can understand this, I get excited... I start talking about Girard insistently, it's like I'm saying, *Come and See!*

Nathaniel hears about Jesus and asks a cynical question "What good can come from Nazareth?" He's a healthy skeptic. But he is open, and so he goes with Phillip. The encounter with Jesus is simply amazing. Jesus seems to have an epiphany about Nathaniel, too... He says, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Jesus sees his honesty and integrity.

And Nathaniel in turn has an epiphany about Jesus, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God!" And Nathaniel wasn't expecting that, in fact he was surprised. Epiphanies are little miracles in themselves. New ways of seeing that open our hearts and change everything...

Paul had an epiphany on the road to Damascus. Martin Luther had an epiphany of justification by grace through faith... In our gospel lesson, Nathaniel has an epiphany, he was invited to come and see, and so he looked into the soul of Jesus and saw the son of God.

The Christian journey is full of epiphanies; sometimes large, sometimes small; they often occur in the context of Faith, Hope, and Love... Surprises upon surprises... new ways of looking and seeing... Ways that move the heart...

The good news today is that the God we worship is a God who opens our eyes; a light in the darkness; a God who looks at despair and sees hope; a God who looks at sin and sees forgiveness; a God who looks at death and sees resurrection; a God who beckons us to come and see... This is real, genuine, authentic stuff... This is stuff of the heart, and it changes us. What Epiphanies have you had lately?

Amen...