



The Nourishing Vocation Project

Engaging the Living Word

[John 1:43-51](#)

What is this particular text?

- Evangelism (sharing the good news) Story
 - Come = invitation
 - See = promise
- Fulfillment of prophecy – him about whom Moses and the prophets wrote
- Declaration
 - Son of God
 - King of Israel
- Prophecy – you will see...

How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- Example of evangelism by invitation
 - The good news is passed on from person to person
 - See and experience God's good news for yourself
- Continues tradition of Hebrew Scriptures
 - God works through people
 - God works person-to-person
- Sets the stage for the motif of encounters with Jesus in John's Gospel
- Builds on previous statements of Jesus' identity in John's Gospel
 - Lamb of God – 1:29, 36
 - The one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit – 1:33
 - Son of God – 1:34
 - Rabbi – 1:38
- v. 51 alludes to the ladder of [Genesis 28:12](#)
 - Jesus is now the bridge between heaven and earth, the temporal and the eternal

How can this text function in the church today?

- Model for evangelism –
 - Invitation to see and experience Jesus
 - Not an attempt to prove who Jesus is
- Reminder that God works through people
- Invitation to consider
 - How are we inviting people?
 - To what are we inviting people?
 - Will people see Jesus in and through our faith communities (or will they see something else?)
 - Does our life together draw people into an experience of the presence of God?
 - If so, how?

- If not, what do we do about it?

What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- It makes me feel invited, too
- It makes me think that we have lost our way when it comes to evangelism
- It fills me with joy
 - It is transformative to be found by Jesus
 - It is powerful to be a part of Jesus finding others
- It gives me hope
- It challenges me

What do you have to say to the text?

- Why have we made sharing our faith and faith experiences so hard, or maybe even taboo?
- “Found” implies they were looking
 - Are we still looking?
- Because Jesus was from Nazareth (a least-expected place), it would have been easy to overlook him
- The invitation is not just “come,” and it is not just “see.” It is “come and see.” The “and” is important

What do you see through this text from the story itself?

- Witness
- Invitation
- Promise
- Jesus at work through ordinary people from the very beginning
- Skepticism that becomes faith through experience
- Experience matters
- Relationship matters
- Confession of faith grows out of encountering Christ

What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)

- The public discourse about Jesus can make people not want to have anything to do with Jesus
- We too often do not invite people to “come and see” Jesus
- The “Jesus” of public discourse is often not the “Jesus” of the Gospels
- Crises of our current time
 - The Christian message has gotten co-opted by loud and obscuring voices
 - The Christian message has become a bludgeon, rather than an invitation to relationship and encounter
 - In general, people are turning away from institutions, including organized religion

What do you see within yourself?

- My own need to experience the presence of Christ
- My own challenges at bearing witness through invitation
- Stories from my own experience of when God has worked through other people to invite me into Jesus’ presence
- Stories of God working through other people to draw me into God’s presence

What is the context – textual and historical?

- Follows John’s declaration that Jesus is the Lamb of God
- Follows the first two disciples leaving John and following Jesus
- Follows Andrew bringing his brother Simon (Peter) to Jesus
- The third “next day” in John’s Gospel
- Precedes Jesus’ first sign, changing water into wine at the wedding at Cana
- The reference to the fig tree
 - Under the fig tree – place where the rabbis study the Torah
 - Place of contemplation [Micah 4:3-4](#); [Zechariah 3:10](#)
 - Place of comfort, blessing, longing
 - Place of consolation
 - Fig trees are messy. Under the fig tree is a messy place

What questions does this text raise for you?

- What does the repetition of the word “found” mean?
- Where does Jesus find me today?
- Who can I invite to “come and see” Jesus?
- How can we “become Philip” in our witness?
- What is the significance of the fig tree?
 - Is it eschatological?
 - Was Nathanael studying the Torah?
 - Was Nathanael just being lazy, taking a nap?
- How would Philip tell this story?
- How would Nathanael tell this story?

What words/themes seem of particular import?

- Jesus decided
- Follow me
- Found from the Greek *heurisko*
 - to discover
 - to learn a location by searching
 - to learn or discover something not previously known, often involving some element of surprise
- Come and See
- I saw you
- You will see

What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?

- Jesus looks for us
- Jesus finds us
- We are not coerced into believing: we are invited
- God uses ordinary people to invite others to see God
- God’s good news is often a surprise
- Jesus invitation includes a promise

What is the as-over-againstness of this text?

- Inviting others to “come and see” can be hard

- Witnessing to our own experiences of Jesus can be difficult
- Sometimes we don't want to be found by God
- Sometimes we don't want to be seen by God

Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?

- Jesus sees
- Jesus finds
- Jesus invites
- Jesus promises
- Jesus is okay with our skepticism

What have others said about this text?

- [“Our task as Christians is not to ‘prove’](#) the truth of the Christian faith, although many scholars have written persuasively of the truth of Christianity. Our task is not even to persuade others to become Christian. Our task is to say, “Come and see.” Philip could have given Nathanael some of his own opinions. He could have said, “This Jesus knows a lot about the Bible.” Or he might have said, ‘There is something about this man Jesus that draws me to him.’ Even when Nathanael expressed skepticism about ‘anything good coming out of Nazareth’ Philip might have listed some successful people from Nazareth. But no: Philip simply said, ‘Come and see,’ as if to say, ‘You don’t need me to advertise for Jesus; come and see for yourself.’ Nathaniel came and saw for himself.” Michael Rogness, Professor Emeritus of Homiletics, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN
- “What about your call? When did you first hear, or feel, or sense a call to follow Jesus? Maybe your call was more akin to simply ceasing to run from God or maybe just finally showing up and listening for instructions. Were you like Samuel of this week’s Old Testament lesson, a church brat, who knew the language of faith and who lived in the shadow of ministry? Did the Divine call cut through all the church-speak and religious noise to rouse you from your slumber? Were there more seasoned saints along the way to guide you and help clarify the voices you heard?” Sharon R. Blezard, ELCA Pastor
- [“Come and see.](#) These words, this invitation, form the heart not simply of this opening scene but much of John’s Gospel. John’s story is structured around encounters with Jesus. Again and again, from these early disciples, to the Pharisee named Nicodemus, to the Samaritan women at the well, to the man born blind, to Peter and Pilate and eventually Thomas, characters throughout John’s Gospel are encountered by Jesus. John structures his story this way, I think, to offer us a variety of possibilities, both in terms of the kind of people to whom Jesus reaches out and the kinds of responses they offer...and we might offer as well.” David Lose, Senior Pastor, Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, MN

What will I teach or proclaim?

- You are invited to come and see Jesus
- Jesus finds you wherever you are
 - And that is not scary!
- Jesus’ invitation is just that – an invitation
- Jesus uses you to invite others into an encounter with Jesus
- Come is an invitation; See is a promise
- Come and See!
- Where does Jesus find you today?
- What does it mean to be found by Jesus?