

Pastor Bill Sass – Sermon for Sunday, January 17, 2021

HE KNOWS US

John 1:43-51

The name means, “God has given.” The bearer of this name was a native of Cana in Galilee, where, Jesus performed His first miracle, changing water into wine. Jesus declared this man to be an Israelite in whom there was no guile, or deceit.

He was in the boat with Simon Peter after Jesus’ resurrection, when Jesus told the fishermen to cast their net on the right side of the boat. They did, and caught a tremendous haul of fish.

Finally, the name of this man, who was a disciple of Jesus, doesn’t even appear in the list of apostles given in the first three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But he probably was the same person known as Bartholomew. His name ... Nathanael.

In the fourth Gospel, St. John, we have the only scriptural reference to Nathanael. He has been referred to the “model disciple,” because of his exclamation of faith: “Teacher. you are the son of God! You are the king of Israel!”

At first, Nathanael was skeptical about Jesus. He evidently had a low opinion of Nazareth, Jesus’ home town, and hesitated accepting anyone from there. This was possibly because the Old Testament doesn’t ever mention the Messiah would come from Nazareth. (He didn’t know: Bethlehem). But Jesus immediately disarmed Nathanael by saying, “Here is a real Israelite. There’s nothing false in him!”

Jesus knew Nathanael although they’d never met. He let him understand that he was known spiritually, too. Jesus was approving the way Nathanael led his life.

What put Nathanael over the top, in his belief in Jesus, was when he was told about being under the fig tree. (This Jesus knows everything,) he must have thought.

Then Jesus amazed Nathanael with the proclamation: “That was only the beginning for those who have faith.”

These events aren't news to any of us, really. We've been taught from childhood that God is everywhere or (omnipresent) and that He's all-knowing (omniscient).

The Bible is filled with illustrations of how God knows all respects of our lives. He knows our thoughts; our motivations; what makes us "tick"; and our weaknesses. All this knowledge, and power, is what makes Him God.

The ancient Jews used to think that God was on Mount Sinai, because that was where Moses received the Ten Commandments. For those primitive people, God was much too small. In many ways, we have made God even smaller. There are Christians who use the Lord's name as a vile curse word, but never in church. They must believe God only hears them on Sunday mornings, within the four walls of a church. So...just who are they kidding?

What it all boils down to, is men and women want to have a "secret" life that God doesn't know about. Jesus let Nathanael know that everything about his life was an "open book." This passage from St. John reminds us of the very same thing. God knows everything, all the time.

It's time to realize God expects us to accept responsibility for every moment of our lives. It has always been that way, and it'll always be that way.

The real comfort of Nathanael's experience comes in the reminder that we are never alone. Jesus always walks with us. How much better to spend our lives knowing He's with us always, instead of spending our lives trying to fool only ourselves.

AMEN!

"S.D.G."