

Sermon Manuscript:

John 1:43-51

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Theological Theme: Christology

Focus Statement: One of the Essential Elements in Our Life is Encountering Jesus

Function Statement: To invite People to Meet Jesus and Walk with Him

For the next two weeks of worship services,

we will be thinking about what is essential to our lives.

What do you think are the things you must have in your life right now?

Masks, vaccines, food, home, money, etc.

Yes, so many things we consider as essential in our lives.

But today's Bible passage speaks of a different kind of essential than these ones.

It is the essential meeting.

We meet countless people throughout our lives.

Sometimes we intend the meeting,

but it can also happen accidentally or even forcibly.

And sometimes,

we experience change through meetings.

However, even if we meet people in the best of circumstances,

they do not always affect us intensely

or change the way we live our lives.

What was the most intense encounter you remember in your life so far?

What was the moment that most affected your life?

You may not have experienced an encounter

that will make a difference in your life yet,

but it will happen.

What an incredible meeting that will be!

Today, we will talk about the essential to our life,

a meeting with Jesus,

an encounter that makes a difference in your life.

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Today's passage shows an amazing encounter.

The two men in this story could not have anticipated this moment,
but it happened and it changed their lives.

The scene contains the first meeting of Jesus, Philip, and Nathanael from John's Gospel.

First of all, the meeting between Philip and Jesus

cannot be easily understood in our current life context.

For example, you are waiting for the subway at Kipling station to go downtown,
and suddenly someone says to you, "follow me."

If that happened, you would likely

ignore the person and leave on a train

or look again to see if that is someone you may know.

Probably no one will hear it and especially no one would follow the person.

But Philip hears that word and follows Jesus right away without any questions.

It may seem to us that he followed Jesus

because his disposition was so obedient or impulsive.

But Philip was not that kind of person.

The Gospel of John tells us,

at the time Jesus feeds the five thousand people with five barley loaves and two fish,

Jesus asks Philip where to buy bread and feed these people.

Philip's answer was,

"Two hundred denarii worth of bread

would not be enough for each of them to get a little."

He calculates the total amount based on

Five thousand people very quickly.

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The amount of 200 denarii was half a year's wage for workers at the time.

In other words, Philip thought it was impossible

because there was no money to buy that amount of bread,

and there was no store with that much bread.

Philip was a rational man, realistic, and pragmatic.

And another time,

some Greeks asked Philip to meet Jesus.

At this time, he did not take them to Jesus right away,

but first discussed it with Andrew.

And with Andrew he introduced the Greeks to Jesus.

Looking at this, Philip was a cautious person.

Also, in John 14,

Philip asked Jesus to show him God.

Even though Jesus had just said

that the one who saw him had already seen the Father,

Philip wanted to confirm it again.

He was a man who wanted to check everything thoroughly.

It helps us know that he wasn't being impulsive when he followed Jesus.

But it seems there is something different in his decision process than his regular way.

I wonder what made Philip follow Jesus?

The Bible says that

Philip was from the town of Bethsaida like Andrew and Peter.

Perhaps Philip heard about Jesus the day before through Andrew and Peter.

Maybe he was looking for Jesus.

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The moment he met Jesus,

Philip would have experienced the presence of Jesus coming into his life.

His zeal for Jesus made him able to meet Jesus,

and Jesus' presence in his life makes him respond to Jesus' call.

Nathanael also had an encounter with Jesus,

which was different from his friend Philip's.

When Philip met Jesus, he was excited

and ran to his friend Nathanael.

Philip tells Nathanael,

“We have found the Messiah, the one Moses and the prophets wrote about:

Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth!”

But Nathanael's reaction is skeptical.

He says, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

Nathanael is from Cana in Galilee. (*Map of Galilee*)

Nazareth is located 6 kilometers from Cana.

He knew what the town of Nazareth was like.

At that time, Nazareth was a very small town.

Not only did it never appear in the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah,

but it was also a rural village that was seemed too shabby

for the hometown of the Messiah, the King of Israel.

Nathanael would definitely not have been able to accept

that the Messiah was from such a small, insignificant town.

Nazareth was not even mentioned in the Old Testament in relation to the Messiah

so he would have been more confident in his judgement of the town.

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When Nathanael did not believe what he said,

Philip encouraged him, "Come and see."

While going to see Jesus with Philip,

maybe Nathanael wanted to use his biblical knowledge

to prove that Jesus was not the Messiah.

But the moment he met Jesus and the moment he heard Jesus speak,

it no longer mattered to Nathanael that Jesus was a Nazarene.

For him, his knowledge about the prophecies

about the birth of the Messiah were not important anymore.

As soon as Jesus met Nathanael,

Jesus said to him,

"Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

Jesus knew about Nathanael well before He met him.

Surprised, Nathanael asked Jesus,

"How do you know me?"

Then Jesus said,

"I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

As soon as he heard that,

Nathanael probably remembered what he had said to Philip about Jesus,

"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

He would not know what to do when he realized that Jesus knew what he said.

And soon, he realized that Jesus knows what was at the center of his heart.

All that was left for him to do was to follow Jesus.

Nathanael immediately followed Jesus with the confession,

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"Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

This is how the two begin their lives as disciples of Jesus.

Meeting Jesus begins to make a difference in their lives.

So, what changed their lives?

Yes, of course, it was changed through an encounter with Jesus.

Of course, not all the people who met Jesus experienced such a huge life change.

Some of them kept living their lives without changing
even though they met Jesus.

Some even started conspiring to kill Jesus after meeting Him.

So why couldn't they live a life transformed through Jesus like Philip and Nathanael?

What was different?

In other words,

why do our lives not change even though we know who Jesus is?

We get hints from Nathanael's attitude.

Nathanael was a man who tried to live a godly life.

But his holy life almost prevented him from meeting Jesus.

Truth is waiting before him, but he depends on his knowledge.

The prophecy about the Messiah he has been studying
instead pushed Jesus away from him.

To him, the town Jesus comes from seems more important than
the reason Jesus came to this earth.

It is not the tremendous biblical and theological knowledge

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that we need to believe in Jesus and live a transformed life.

What we need is a response of faith to His call.

If our lives are not changing,

maybe we are trying to meet the Messiah

through worldly prejudices

and self-centered, supposedly “godly”, habits like Nathanael.

So, what does it mean to have a life-changing encounter with Jesus?

First, it means a change in what we experience.

Nathanael reacted skeptically to Philip's words.

But when Philip said, "Come and see," he followed Philip to meet Jesus.

Of course, it was somewhat ridiculous in his opinion,

but he still followed his friend to Jesus.

Because he went, he met in person the Messiah he had been waiting for.

Not only that, he stayed with Jesus for three years, joining His ministry
and learning the Word of God from Jesus.

If he hadn't come to see him,

he would have ended his life only studying about Him

and not experiencing the Messiah.

But he met Jesus, and the Word came to live in his life.

He realized the deeper meaning of the law he had studied,

and he experienced firsthand all the amazing things we see in the Bible.

Like Nathanael, when we meet Jesus,

we will experience the wonderful things written in the Bible.

Our meeting with Jesus will allow us to discover truths

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that we couldn't find in our lives
and allow us to escape wrong biases and ways of thinking about our lives,
like Nathanael's prejudice against the place of Nazareth.

At the same time,

our lives will be transformed as we experience Jesus' help.

I still vividly remember the first time I met Jesus when I was 14 years old.

Most surprisingly, after meeting Jesus,

the purpose of my life became clear.

I realized that the purpose of my life should be a life for the glory of God,

and it still gives me a clear sense

for reading the Bible, praying, studying, and even eating.

A distinct purpose became clear for each of my actions.

My personal encounter with Jesus clearly showed the way I should go,

and at the same time, I realized why God made me and what He wanted me to do.

But I also had to start trying to live the life Jesus wanted.

Meeting Jesus is a wonderful moment of enlightenment.

But it still takes a lot of effort **to put** what we realize about Jesus **into** our lives.

Philip immediately responded to Jesus' call.

However, as we saw earlier, Philip's habits and dispositions did not change.

The moment he met Jesus, he realized what was most important,

but he still had his old life habits.

I am not saying we need to change all of our old habits.

I am not telling you that you should not be a realist or be pragmatist.

I am talking about a change in our habits of

trusting and relying more on Jesus.

I am talking about a change in depending more on Jesus.

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We all have a list of considerations for making life decisions.

Perhaps it is money,

or what other people think.

What is important than depending on Jesus?

Whatever it may be, it can be a barrier between Jesus and us,

like Nathanael's prejudice and his self-satisfying knowledge.

We may misunderstand.

When we meet Jesus, will He suddenly change all of our habits?

That's a big misconception.

Jesus doesn't force us to change

but helps us realize our need to change.

Just as telling Nathanael that He saw him when he was under the fig tree,

was the start of a life change for Nathanael,

so Jesus helps us change by leading us

on a journey of discovery and growth.

From the moment we meet Jesus and begin to follow him like Philip and Nathanael,

we begin the marathon race of our lives.

Depending on where we are along the course,

we may have to climb uphill to make the change Jesus wants,

or maybe we need to go down a steep slope like a cliff.

Where will we find the courage to go down steep slopes

and the power to climb high hills?

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We will be empowered by learning and applying the Word of God

to our lives and by proclaiming it through our lives.

Also, in fellowship with Jesus through prayer,

little by little, we rely on the Holy Spirit to transform our lives

into what Jesus wants us to **be** and **do** throughout our lives.

That way, we get closer to the place of life that we realized through Jesus.

It's not easy to change ourselves,

especially if the habit has been around for a long time.

So, we look for an excellent coach to help us change.

A player who meets an excellent coach sometimes goes beyond their limits.

Of course, not everyone goes beyond that limit.

No matter how excellent the coach they have met,

they can't expect any change from that meeting

unless the players themselves make an effort.

Dear friends,

Jesus is the one true coach in your life,

who can train you, equip you and guide you on this marathon race.

Since your personal encounter with Jesus,

where is your marathon race taking you?

Thankfully, our life of faith is like a long-distance race, a marathon,

not a short-distance sprint.

Sometimes we fall and sin,

but Jesus helps us stand up again.

He helps us remember the moment

we made a commitment to Him on the starting line.

Also, He gives us that confidence in His unchanging love and promise.

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The essential thing in our life is to meet Jesus

and let him make a difference in our lives through constant fellowship with Him.

2 Corinthians 5 verse 17 says,

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:

The old has gone, the new is here!”

The moment we meet Christ, we are transformed.

But at the same time, we must continue to meet with Him throughout our lives,

to grow in our relationship with Him, and through Him,

we will experience lasting change.

Philip and Nathanael continued to change throughout their lives.

Now it's our turn.

Jesus invites us to the race of a transformed life.

He will help us experience the wonderful grace of God's Word

unfolding in our lives through God's Spirit in us working for change.

Jesus is calling us even at this moment.

Maybe you aren't sure you want to change in the way Jesus may show you.

Let's walk together

by responding to Jesus' call.

I hope that you meet Jesus and get to know Jesus

and walk with Him throughout your life. Amen