

# Sunday Sermon

Revd Canon Charles Jenkin – 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021 – Epiphany 2

*1 Samuel 3.1-10; Psalm 139.1-9; Revelation 5.1-10; John 1.43-end*

The calling of the disciples in St John's Gospel feels more personal than in the other gospels, but once you see John's particular emphasis, it makes sense of the others too. In the other gospels, Jesus kind of turns up, calls a disciple and somehow that's it, they follow him. There's no backstory, nothing that indicates what has brought a disciple to that point of decision. But in St John's gospel there is an important clue.

Jesus has the gift of seeing into a person's soul, seeing past all the complex feelings and failings that a person has, and seeing what truly motivates a person. This is not how about how good or bad that person may be. It's not about how successful or struggling a person may be. It's not about how happy or sad they may be. Jesus sees who they really can be, who they can become with a bit of grace and encouragement and love. And then he calls them. He calls you and me and us. For a purpose. For his purpose.

Jesus is impressed by Nathanael, and Nathanael is in turn impressed by what Jesus sees in he, Nathanael. Jesus sees someone who is true of heart, and is honest with himself about what he sees; an Israelite in whom there is no deceit. Here is someone who does not kid himself, either about himself, or about state of the world.

Jesus also sees what really matters to Nathanael. "*I saw you under the fig tree*" is an allusion to prophecies of the Kingdom of God; it's a kind of vision of a kingdom of peace and justice and contentment, everyone sitting under their own fig tree, a symbol of richness and plenty. Jesus sees that Nathanael longs to make the world a better place, and so he calls him, because that is Jesus' mission too, to make the world a better place. And then it is Nathanael's turn to be impressed. He is amazed that Jesus has seen into his soul, into his deepest longings, and his heart is captured.

St John's take on why people are called to follow Jesus, is that they are called, we are called, to become a part of something that is a whole lot bigger than ourselves. As Jesus says later in St John's Gospel, we do not choose him, he chooses us, however much we may like to rejoice in our own freedom of choice. We do of course always have the power to say no, to turn away from the call of Jesus, but that is a different matter.

And so, being a disciple of Jesus becomes a process of working out what it is that Jesus is calling you to do, to make the world a better place, and to take your own part in the growing of his Kingdom. It can be a long road full of surprises and unexpected joys; and also disappointments, setbacks and heartaches. But in the end it is about doing what you were born for, and called by Jesus for, and given grace by God for.

Then important thing is that we learn to trust Jesus in this process, because he knows what he is doing. He knows whom he has called. He knows your feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness. He knows your fears and struggles. But he also knows your strengths, and the things that you do not yet know about yourself. Jesus knows who you can become,

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with a bit of help. And so he calls you. And those whom he calls he does not abandon, ever. Amen.

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