

Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit.
Worship at Home
17th January 2021

2nd Sunday in Epiphany
The tingle factor

I wonder, can you recall a time when you were so excited, you positively tingled with excitement? After the year we've had, that may be hard, but if you think of children on Christmas Day morning, their excitement sends tingles throughout their entire bodies, and they can't wait to tell their parents the good news that it's time to get up – even if it's 5am!

Today we are going to meet two Disciples who were so excited about meeting Jesus, they tingled so much it had them wanting to follow Jesus immediately – but first they have to tell others the good news.

I wonder if you can name those first Disciples who say to another 'Come and see? We'll see if you are right later. But let's begin with some words Samuel heard. (1 Sam 3:11 NIV)

Call to worship

The Lord said to Samuel "I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle".

Let us tingle with joy as we gather in our Lord Jesus' name to meet in his presence and perhaps hear him call our name today.

Hymn StF 489 All I once held dear

1 All I once held dear,
built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain
I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this.
*Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.*

2 Now my heart's desire

is to know you more,
to be found in you
and known as yours.
To possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift
of righteousness.

3 Oh, to know the power
of your risen life,
and to know you in
your sufferings.
To become like you
in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live
and never die.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Prayers of praise and thanksgiving

Lord, we praise your Holy name,
and thank you that you know us,
each one by name;
we are so amazed by your love for us;
a love that will never cease.
Lord, we thank you that you know us
and can see our true potential,
for you know what we were created to be.
We thank you that you send others to help us
achieve that potential,
to lead us and guide us
on our journey to know you better. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Lord we come before you to say sorry,
sorry for all the times we've let you down.
Sometimes, Lord, we're so busy talking
and doing that we fail to hear you.
We miss the still, small voice saying "Stop, listen".
Lord, we're sorry for being too busy to listen.

You speak in so many different ways, Lord,
one being through other people –
but we often take no notice
and continue in our own way.
Help us to tune into your voice.
Help us to feel your presence in our lives,
in our hearts and minds,
to know the wonder of your assurance -
that our sins are forgiven -
so we can see clearly the path ahead,

and can hear you call us to take that first step, on a journey where our faith will always lead us closer to you through the gift of your Spirit given to us in Jesus' Name; Jesus, your Son, our Saviour who calls us to follow him. Amen.

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I asked you a question at the start. Let me rephrase that question now.

Who were the first disciples to follow Jesus, and what were they doing? Your answer may be 'Oh that's easy, Simon Peter, he was by Lake Galilee with Zebedee's sons James and John, and Peter's brother was the fourth – Andrew.' That's not an unsurprising answer, after all we get it three times – in Matthew, Mark and Luke's Gospel. But Andrew is often overlooked, he doesn't have major roles – or writes a Book, or Letters like the others.

We set that record straight today. In John's Gospel, Andrew is mentioned first and we are in Bethany, not Galilee. The second disciple who brings another to meet Jesus is Philip. Let's hear their stories now.

Bible Reading: John 1:35-51

John's Disciples Follow Jesus

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means 'Teacher'), where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel." Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.'"

Reflection

In the Gospel of John we hear a slightly different take on the call of the first disciples. Andrew, a follower of John the Baptist, is the first to be told who Jesus is - by the Baptist - and rushes off to find his brother Simon, to bring him along to Jesus, who changes his name to Peter - the rock. And the 3rd and 4th disciples to be called are not James or John (our Gospel writer). Perhaps John doesn't want to focus on himself, indeed he may be the unnamed person with Andrew. Instead we meet Philip, who is also excited by the news that Jesus is here. Philip wants to follow Jesus when he hears him say 'Come'. But he also wants to make sure Nathanael comes along too. Both Andrew and Philip are so transformed by meeting Jesus, tingling with such excitement, they can't wait to tell others.

So Andrew rushes off to tell his brother, and Simon is intrigued enough to respond, although his initial excitement changes when he meets Jesus. He's told he has to change his name to Peter, and he will be the rock on which Jesus will build his church. He's probably tingling with dread, now. Knowing Jesus can lead to some amazing changes taking place in your life, and not always easy ones.

When Philip meets Jesus – the very next day, Jesus is preparing to travel home to Galilee.

“Come with me” Philip is told, and he wants to go, but first he has to find Nathanael. Unlike Simon Peter, Nathanael isn't prepared to listen. When Philip says “we've found the one spoken of by the prophets. He's Jesus of Nazareth”, - well, Nathanael just scoffs. He regards Nazareth as a place of no importance, and nowhere suitable for a Messiah to come from. But he is still persuaded by Philip to come and see.

Nathanael is quite flabbergasted when Jesus speaks to him. There's a rather bizarre conversation between them. Jesus says “Here is a true Israelite”, Nathanael asks “How do you know this?”. “I saw you under the fig tree”, replies Jesus. “Wow! you must be the Son of God then,” says Nathanael.

A very strange way to conclude Jesus is the Messiah! We could spend ages trying to figure that one out, but perhaps we don't need to. For the main point here is that Jesus already knows about Nathanael. Jesus says ' here is a true Israelite, a genuine man, one of no deceit. In other words, Jesus sees a true man of God, an honest and righteous, God-fearing man. And a man who, although recognising who Jesus really is, is told – You ain't seen nothing yet!

Jesus knows Nathanael will be a good disciple for him. But we have no written evidence of what Nathanael did next, he will never be named again. But perhaps that is the point too.

Nathanael is a minor disciple, but still important to Jesus, and that applies to most of us too. We can't all take on roles such as Peter, being a major light in the Christian world, but we can still be the salt of the earth, bringing the taste of what it is to be a Christian into the lives of the people we meet, so that they want to see Jesus. You see, we are all being called by God. There will be an excitement, a tingle, when we accept Jesus as Lord, but there is a challenge to 'come and follow me'. It will not always be easy.

But we have the promise that Nathanael received when he recognised who Jesus was. 'You will see greater things'.

So be ready to be changed, to feel that tingle of excitement, but perhaps with a slight touch of dread. Because, knowing that Jesus knows all about you is exciting, but sometimes we do need that bit of help to take that first step to say 'Here I am, Lord, I am listening'. The wonderful thing

about God is that he truly does know us, and if we don't recognise him calling, don't be surprised if he sends someone along to help, even if it takes several attempts to get you to listen - I can vouch for that!

Remember this, the journey to know God is one we take together, one we share, whether we are an Andrew or Philip bringing others, a Peter who will lead, or a Nathanael, praising and living our lives with the knowledge that Jesus is there to guide us, and that the Spirit will strengthen us when we follow God's call. For, as it says in Isaiah 43:1 ' I called you by name, and you are mine.' So do not be afraid to answer “ Here I am, Lord. Speak to me”. Amen.

Hymn 85 Speak O lord

- 1 Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
to receive the food of your holy word.
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
all your purposes, for your glory.
- 2 Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
in the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail;
let their truth prevail over unbelief.
- 3 Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
that will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till your Church is built
and the earth is filled with your glory.

Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

Prayers of intercession

Lord, as we think about the people we know, we thank you for their friendship and support in our daily lives and on our faith journey.
Help us to listen to your call to help those we

could speak to, to offer a kind word, to listen to their worries and to be a friend in deed.
The Lord hears our prayer. **Thanks be to God.**

Lord, as we sit here in silence (*pause*),
Help us to listen out to the needy of our world:
we pray for those who are voiceless –
the refugee fleeing a war-torn country,
the vulnerable and the lonely,
the abused and the homeless.
We pray for those ill at home or hospital,
those awaiting surgery, unsure when that can be.
We pray for our doctors and nurses who have responded to your call to be healers in our world,
especially during this pandemic,
whether that be at home, or abroad.
The Lord hears our prayer. **Thanks be to God.**

Finally, Lord, we pray for all those who hold power to make a difference in your world:
for the governments who could do more to help their own vulnerable citizens;
for those who can assist in charitable aid, through monetary gifts or physical ways.
We pray for those who hear your call to missionary work, confidently responding with a clear voice saying 'Here I am Lord, send me!'
The Lord hears our prayer. **Thanks be to God.**

We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour who taught us to say:

Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory, forever and ever.
Amen.

Hymn 563 O Jesus I have promised

1 O Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end;
Lord, be for ever near me,
my master and my friend;

I shall not fear the battle
if you are by my side,
nor wander from the pathway
if you will be my guide.

- 2 O let me feel you near me;
the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me,
around me, and within;
but, Jesus, now draw nearer,
and shield my soul from sin.
- 3 O let me hear you speaking
in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me,
to hasten or control;
Lord, speak, and make me listen,
O guardian of my soul.
- 4 O Jesus, you have promised
to all who follow you,
that where you are in glory
your servant shall be too;
and, Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end;
O give me grace to follow
my master and my friend.

John Ernest Bode (1816-1874)

Sending out prayer

Speak to us, Lord,
help us to go where you call us,
to serve you better among
our family, our friends, and our neighbours.
Lord Jesus, you call us to follow you.
Go with us into the world.
Go before us in all we do,
so we can go in your name
to love you and those we meet
and to be your voice in our world today. Amen.

Blessing

May the blessing of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you now and always. Amen.

Kathy Lowrie