

## Trust Jesus

Text: John 1:43-51 for 1/14/18 by Pastor Bolwerk

*43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." 44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45 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." 46 "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. 47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." 48 "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." 49 Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." 50 Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." 51 He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."*

What would a stranger have to do to earn your trust? Every day strangers are trying to earn our trust. Sales people and business owners tell us about their products or expertise while trying to get us to trust them. Their hope is that if we trust them, even just a little, then we might spend our money on what they have to offer. They want our trust so they can get something from us.

But what if a stranger started talking to you, and as they spoke they started telling you all kinds of information about yourself? What if this stranger not only told you facts about your life, but was actually able to tell you about what you are thinking, or how you were feeling when you made a certain decision or took some action? And then what if this person did not try to sell you something, but instead offered to give you something amazing? Would you trust that person, or would you be suspicious or perhaps a little skeptical?

The Gospel writer John sets before us a similar situation. As John writes about this situation his words are leading us to this one conclusion:

Theme: Trust Jesus

1. He knows you.
2. He connects you to God.

As we meet Jesus in John's Gospel Jesus is calling his first disciples. Jesus happened to be in the area where John the Baptist was working along the Jordan River. And as Jesus passes by, John the Baptist says, "**Look, the Lamb of God**" (John 1:36)! Andrew, one of John's disciples, hears him say this and he starts to follow Jesus. Jesus invites Andrew to come and see where he is staying. Once Andrew knows where Jesus is staying he goes and finds his brother Peter and tells him, "**We have found the Messiah**" (John 1:41).

After spending some time with Andrew and Peter Jesus wants to go back to Galilee. But he does not want to leave before he calls a few more disciples. And this time Jesus takes initiative: **The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me"** (v. 43). Instead of waiting for someone to follow, Jesus asks Philip to follow him. Jesus knew very well who he was calling when he went to find Philip. You see, Jesus also wanted to call Nathanael, and Jesus knew that Philip would do just that. After Jesus told Philip to follow him **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"** (v. 45).

But Nathanael's response does not sound very positive. He scoffs at what Philip says to him. Nathanael says, "**Nazareth! Can anything good come from there**" (v. 46a)? While his

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words might seem somewhat harsh, that might be because Nathanael knew Old Testament prophecy. Being an Israelite who was waiting for the Messiah, Nathanael knew the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, and that he would rule from the throne of David in Jerusalem. Nazareth was just some little town in the middle of nowhere in northern Israel. No one important comes from Nazareth. How could Nathanael trust a Messiah who was not from Bethlehem? Nathanael may have rightly felt a little skeptical, but the only way to know for sure if this Jesus was the Messiah was to do what Philip asked him to do, "Come and see."

So Nathanael does, and when Jesus sees him he works to remove Nathanael doubts about him: **When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you"** (vs. 47, 48). Jesus displays his power by letting Nathanael see that he knows him. And he knows more than just his name. Jesus says that Nathanael is **"a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false."** Nathanael was someone who believed the Old Testament promises of the Messiah. He was someone waiting for God to send his promised Savior. Jesus shows Nathanael that he not only knew something about him, but he also knew what Nathanael was doing. Jesus knew where he was; that he was sitting under the shade of that fig tree. And Jesus knew when he was there because Jesus saw him there before Philip called him. Nathanael's response to this revelation of Jesus was one of faith: **Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel"** (v. 49). Nathanael trusted Jesus.

Jesus also calls us to trust him. He does this through his Word and his sacraments. At our baptism Jesus called us out of the darkness of the original sin that we were born with. All throughout our lives he keeps calling us through his word. He calls us to trust him for all we need in this life, and in the life to come.

But do always trust Jesus to be the God and Savior he says he is? When Jesus answers our prayers by giving us what we need instead of what we want do we question his goodness? Or when troubles and problems start to overwhelm our lives do we, like Nathanael, scoff at the idea of Jesus truly being the Savior? Do we question what he can do for us thinking, "Jesus of Nazareth, what good can he do me right now? Now that I have lost my job or my health." or "What good does trusting Jesus do now that my spouse has left me. Why didn't he do something to stop that from happening," or "What can Jesus do for me now that I found out I have terminal cancer and only have a few years, or months, to live? Why trust Jesus? Can anything good come from trusting Jesus?" We question his power, and when doubts start to set in we may even question his love for us.

Like Nathanael, Jesus removes our doubts by showing that he knows us. He shows us that by addressing our problems. Not the problems we think are so important. Jesus deals with our greatest problem: our broken relationship with a holy God. Jesus works to fix that relationship. Just look at Jesus' words in all four Gospels: Is there a sin Jesus did not work to make us aware of? Jesus knows us and our sins. There is nothing hidden from him. Yet he does not show us our sins to punish us. Jesus is making us aware of how our sins are destroying our relationship with God. Jesus tells us about ourselves as he works to turn us away from our sins.

But Jesus doesn't just know our sins, he also knows our hurts. Christ suffered just like we suffer, so he understand us. As the writer to the Hebrews said, **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been**

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**tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin** (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus knows what it is like to be abandoned by people who say they love you; he knows what it is like to lose a loved one; he knows what it is like knowing you're going to die and that death is coming soon.

He also knows that before we die we need to be in right relationship with God. So Jesus did something about that relationship. For every law of God we broke, Jesus made sure he kept it perfectly for us. For every sin we have ever committed, Christ made sure that those sins were paid for by his death on the cross. And even for those times when we doubted Jesus and didn't trust him, he paid for our sinful doubts and lack of faith. Jesus rose from the dead to keep leading us, making sure we know exactly the way to get to heaven. And that "way" is Jesus. Trust Jesus, for he knows you. Even though he knows you he still loves you and forgives you.

Back in the early days of the telephone, when you wanted to make a call to someone you first called the telephone operator and let her know who you wanted to connect to. The telephone operator would then take a physical cable and connect your line to the line of the person you wanted to reach. Jesus does something similar for us: If we want to reach heaven and have eternal life we have to be connected to God the Father. Jesus is that connection. So Trust Jesus. He connects you to God.

Jesus goes way back in the Old Testament to show how he has always been that connection. In response to Nathanael's confession of faith **Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man"** (vs. 50-51). What Jesus is referring to here is the dream Jacob had as he was fleeing from his brother Esau. In that dream Jacob saw a ladder, or a staircase going from earth to heaven, and angels were going up and down on it. Jesus is telling Nathanael that he, Jesus, is that staircase, and that the greater gift that he offers is an open heaven. Jesus is explaining how he is the connection between earthly life and heavenly life.

Later in John's Gospel, Jesus makes it absolutely clear that he is the only connection to God the Father. **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"** (John 14:6). The gap sin created between humans and God it is a cavernous one. It is huge beyond our comprehension. It is a gap that we can never fill. But the impassable gap between us and eternal life was bridged by the cross of Jesus Christ. It is only by faith in Christ that we have access to the bridge that connects us with God the Father.

This is why we need to trust Jesus. We need to trust him for the power to turn to his cross every day. It was on a cross that Jesus completed the work of paying for all of our sins. Now, at Christ's cross, in repentance, we lay down the sins that damn our souls and burden our consciences. At his cross Christ washes us with his blood, cleanses us from our sins, and covers us with the clean clothes of his perfect life. Cleansed by Christ he connects us to a holy God.

Trusting Jesus, we have a direct connection to the Almighty God. Through that connection we can go to God for anything. We can ask God for help with any of the problems and troubles we have in this life. We can ask God to help others who we know are struggling. We can even thank our heavenly Father for what he has done, and what he continues to do for us. And we know God hears us because of the connection Jesus has made between us and his Father. Trust Jesus, for he is the one who connects you to God.

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Trust: It can be difficult determining whether or not people in this world are worthy of our trust. Thankfully, it's not difficult determining whether or not Jesus is worth trusting. Trust Jesus. He is the only one who truly knows everything about you, yet he still loves you. He knows what you need, and he knows how to take care of your needs. Trust Jesus, because he is the only one who can connect you to your gracious, loving, heavenly Father. Amen.