

Living Life Alive
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John 1:35-51

³⁵ The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶ As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them. They replied, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ "Come and see," he said. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. ⁴¹ Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ"). ⁴² Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, "Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas" (which means "Peter").

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come, follow me." ⁴⁴ Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter's hometown. ⁴⁵ Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth."

⁴⁶ "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" "Come and see for yourself," Philip replied. ⁴⁷ As they approached, Jesus said, "Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity."

⁴⁸ "How do you know about me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus replied, "I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you." ⁴⁹ Then Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰ Jesus asked him, "Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this."

⁵¹ Then he said, "I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth."

Good morning. It's good to be able to look into the Word of God for a few moments again today! We are reading from the gospel of John in the New Testament and we will be giving some thought to the verses that were just read for us. That's John chapter 1 beginning at verse 35.

Today's passage begins where we left off last week, with John the Baptist fulfilling his God given mission to announce the arrival of the Savior that was coming into the world and then pointing Jesus out to the people as the One who is that Messiah-rescuer. Then these verses go on to tell us about some of the first people that would choose to follow Jesus.

Verse 35 opens up with the scene of John the Baptist standing with two men who had decided to not only go to the Jordan River to check out the Baptizer, but had committed themselves to stick close to him, hearing more of his preaching and taking to heart what he was saying.

John 1:35-36

³⁵ The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶ As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!"

We are told one of those men following John was Andrew. We are not told the name of the other man, but many believe it was likely the apostle John who wrote this record for us to read.

On the day we are being told about, John the Baptist sees Jesus once again and to his own two followers he again points out that Jesus is the “Lamb of God”, that is – He is the One who would make it possible for people to be forgiven by God and brought back into relationship with God.

So, right then and there, the two that had been following John leave him to go find out more about this One introduced as the Lamb of God. And the two of them stayed close to Jesus for the rest of that day.

Andrew then grabbed his brother, a man we know as Peter the Apostle, and introduced Peter to Jesus. Look at verse 40 and 41.

John 1:40-41

⁴⁰ *Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus.*

⁴¹ *Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means “Christ”).*

In essence Andrew said to Peter, “come and see the One I have found”. Those are the words also used later in our passage, verse 47, by a man named Philip, as he talked to his friend Nathanael.

John 1:47

“Come and see for yourself,” Philip replied.

These are also the very words that a woman used to invite the residents of her town in Samaria to check out who she had found. This is in John chapter 4. There, her words are recorded . . .

John 4:29

²⁹ *“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”*

“Come and see” is the theme of a missionary’s calling. They are the words we as a church say to the community of Vermilion. “Come and see” is what we say as we are running the Alpha Course right now. “Come and see” is the simple phrase that each of us can use to introduce our friends to Jesus.

We just extend the invitation to take a look at Him, have a listen, consider if Jesus’ life, His teachings, miracles and death and resurrection add up to Him being the source of true and eternal life. “Come and see for yourself”. John tells us this is how Peter came to know the Lord.

To complete the initial survey of our verses – we see Jesus leaving the Jordan River area to go to the region of Galilee where He extends the invitation to a man named Philip to “come and see”. Verse 43 says . . .

John 1:43

⁴³ *The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Come, follow me.”*

That is where Philip, then in turn, invites Nathanael to do the same.

My invitation to you is to come and see Jesus, the one who invites you to follow Him. Last week we considered the one who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Today, the Scriptures invite us to follow the Savior who know already knows us.

Do you remember what you were doing 6 months ago? It would have been between Christmas and New Year's Day. With all that has gone on since then, it seems more like a couple years back.

How many of us, while we were celebrating this last Christmas with our families were imagining that just a few months later would be living in pandemic lock-downs and fear?

It wasn't on my mind. I don't know what I would have done differently if I had known. I doubt I could have convinced you about what lie ahead for all of us, if that had been my job to do.

There is always so much about our futures that we do not know. We have no idea. For brief moments of time I have wished I knew where I would be 10 years from now and what I would be doing.

But it is always just a very brief moment of thinking, because really, I don't want to know. Not just because of what might be difficult days that lie ahead for me, but because it would change the way I live out my present.

I believe it is a very good thing that we don't know all of our own life story, but there is someone who does. The Lord does. In Psalm 139, David wrote . . .

Psalm 139:1-2, 4, 16

¹ O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. ² . . . You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. ⁴ You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD. ¹⁶ You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book.

There is nothing that is beyond all-knowing of the Lord. What we believe is our secret that no-one knows, really is not unknown. As David revealed for us about God, even our thoughts are fully known and understood by the Lord.

For Andrew and Peter and Philip and Nathanael, they discovered that this One who the Baptizer said was the Lamb of God, this man who stood right in front of them was also One who already knew them.

Let's start with Nathanael's meeting with Jesus. Look at verses 47 to 49 . . .

John 1:47-49

⁴⁷ As they [Philip and Nathanael] approached, Jesus said, "Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity." ⁴⁸ "How do you know about me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus replied, "I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you." ⁴⁹ Then Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!"

Jesus' assessment of the character of Nathanael came at the moment of their first meeting. It was so sudden and without explanation that Nathanael couldn't help but ask how it was that Jesus could possibly know this about him.

Then Nathanael is blown away a second time when Jesus tells him that he knew where he was before Philip had even spoken to him about Jesus. Commentators on this passage believe that Jesus was not only revealing the knowledge of his location, but also what he was doing.

It was an expression of rabbis, that to be “under the fig tree” was to be engaged in studying the Scriptures. It would be fitting that Jesus would point out Nathanael’s diligence to study the Word of God when He assessed him as one who . . .

John 1:47-49

is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity.

That Jesus had somehow seen where Nathanael had been and what he had been doing and could tell him about his own character when they had never met before astounded him.

And with those two statements of Jesus, Nathanael came out with the declaration that Jesus must be the Son of God and the King of Israel.

This Jesus, who invites us to follow Him, already knows who we are and where we have been. He knows our past! Not just what we have done, but who we have been.

The Samaritan woman I referred to earlier had the same experience when Jesus, whom she had never met before, told her that he knew about her previous life experiences, even being able to tell her how many failed marriages she had had. Remember her words to the people of her town?

John 4:29

²⁹ *“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”*

The truly amazing and beautiful part of the good news about Jesus, is that even though he knew all about people, what they were really like, and what they had already done, He never turned anyone away. It really didn’t matter the number or the kind of dark, sinful secrets people thought they had.

The Lord Jesus still offers today to give the gift of abundant and eternal life to us, if we, too, will follow Him. And He is not surprised or shocked by who you have been, or where you have been, or what you have done. He will only be disappointed if you think you are without need of the forgiveness and grace of God.

Jesus, the One we are invited to follow knows our past. And He also knows our future. Now, let’s go back to Peter’s first meeting with the Lord Jesus. That is in verse 42 . . .

John 1:42

⁴² *Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, “Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas” (which means “Peter”).*

Peter’s meeting with Jesus was different than that of Nathanael. Just as your meeting with Jesus will be different from mine. Jesus did not tell Peter about where he had been or what he had done. He told him who he was right then and then who he would one day become.

Simon, was his given name, the one his parents chose for him. In those days you only got one name. As you can imagine, that could make things kind of complicated, especially if you happen to be one of those with the name Mary. It seems every fourth woman of that day had that name.

So, this Simon is distinguished from others by coupling his name with that of his father, who just happened to be another John, like the gospel writer and the baptizer. Anyways, Jesus affirms that Peter has been known by his given name “Simon”.

But then he gives him a piece of information that later would confirm that Jesus had knowledge of his future, when he tells him that he will be called Cephas or Peter.

The Bible here, gives us this new name for Simon in two languages. Cephas is Aramaic and it means “rock”. Peter is the Greek equivalent that also means “rock”. Now you are called Simon, but you will be called “the rock”

With the assistance of the gospel writer Matthew, we gain more insight into the reason behind the new name that Jesus gave Simon.

Matthew 16:17-18

¹⁷ Jesus replied, “You are blessed, Simon son of John . . . ¹⁸ . . . I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.

The new name that Peter would come to be known by spoke to what this man would become in the future. First there would be three years of following Jesus around, very much playing the part of a student with a lot to learn.

Before any church would be built on the foundation of his life and his testimony for Jesus, he would have to go through the humbling experience of denying Jesus outright and then being reinstated by Him.

When Jesus told him what his name was going to be, he was not yet a solid rock that could serve as a foundation for the largest and most enduring empire the world has seen, the Kingdom of God.

Peter met the One who already knew what he would become. Today, you and I are invited to follow the same Jesus, who already knows what we will become.

I was at Kingsfold Retreat Center for one of the weeks of the course I was taking in the last years. That week, in one of our devotional times, we were considering this very thought – that God knows us in a way different that we are today.

For as we live out today, He already knows us by what we will one day become. In essence, God could say to me right now, your name is Bradley Todd Shellenberg, but you will be called “_____”.

I don't know what that new name is yet, but whatever it is will speak to who and what God created me to be. Abraham was given the new name to mean "father of many". Jacob became Israel, meaning for him "one who wrestled with God". And Simon became the Rock.

That day at Kingsfold we were directed to the Scripture verse – Revelation chapter 2 verse 17. It tells us this . . .

Revelation 2:17

17 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious . . . I will give . . . a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it.

Those who are victorious are those who trust in Jesus to bring them to victory. And those Jesus brings to victory will be given a new name written on a white stone. As good and functional as the name I was given has been for this life, I have another name.

That day at Kingsfold, during our lunch break, we walked down to the fairly steep hill, to the Ghost River that flows through the valley right behind the Retreat Center.

From the river I pulled a white stone to remind me of God's plan for my life. And on the bottom of the stone I later wrote something. In a moment I will share with you what I wrote.

First let me tell you this . . . The Lord, who knows you as well by what you will become as he knows you by what you are and have been, has a new name for you. He already sees the completed picture of your life.

Today He invites you to follow Him, so that He can show you just how beautiful a masterpiece you can become. The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 10 . . .

Ephesians 2:10

10 . . . we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

For Peter to get nearer and nearer to the masterpiece God wanted Him to be, and to do the incredible things planned for him to do, he needed to stay close to the Lord he chose to follow. This is what I want to do, and I would invite you to "come and see" who Jesus is, and to follow Him.

This I know, your life will be crafted and shaped by the One who made this masterpiece called "all of creation", and you will find yourself drawn into doing the good, the incredible things He planned for you long ago.

My white stone? The real one is yet to come. This one does not have a name on it, because I am just living out day to day following - until I am shown by my new name, what God saw in me all along. This white stone says simply, ["Known by God" Rev. 2:17].

I now invite you to respond in prayer to Jesus' invitation to follow Him. Some of you may need to acknowledge that you have not been following closely. Other things, lesser things have distracted you from the most important thing.

(Prayer of response)

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ . . . we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

