



Series: The Gospel of John: For God so Loved...

Date: September 11, 2022

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Text: John 1:35-51

Title: Come and See!

Good morning, Mercy Church! Shout out to everyone at our Northeast campus. (Acknowledge both campuses).

Before we continue in the book of John, I wanted to take a moment and highlight some amazing things happening in our church that **you** need to get in on. We're about to see Jesus start to call the first disciples. Jesus, the missionary God is about to start calling the first disciples who would follow him for 3 years and the world would be turned upside down as a result. And that mission still goes on today and there are some opportunities through Mercy Church that we have to equip you for this task, and you have to do it! The first thing is that we are having our Mission of God class starting on Oct. 20th. This class is for anyone! Now listen up. This is the most important event that we have in our missions department all year! If you're wanting to know more or get connected to missions' opportunities or to be equipped in how to play your part in God's global mission. This is for you! We're

going to be talking about how God has been a missionary God from the beginning of scripture, we're going to learn about the state of our world, we will talk about how you personally can play a part in God's global mission even from right here in Charlotte! Every single person that is a follower of Jesus is called to play their part in God's global mission. You have an assignment! Come and hear about how you can get involved. Seats are going so make sure you sign up! IF you're interested in ANYTHING missions related this is the most important class to be part of.

The second thing you should do is to sign up for our Reconstructing Faith equip forum. In today's passage we're going to see an example of someone to come to faith despite his doubts. Many of us have thought that if we question things about our faith that means we have to lose our faith, or to take a break from Christianity in order to do that. No, no! The Lord can handle and wants our questions. So, if you are someone who has a lot of questions but doesn't know how to approach them, please come! Or if you are someone who has a friend or family member who says they are deconstructing, please come. We want you to be equipped on how to have these conversations. Questions are good! Let's ask them





together. The only faith systems that don't allow questions are cults and that's not what we want to see here. We want you to know how you can ask questions so that your faith can be reconstructed. Having questions doesn't mean you need to lose your faith in the scriptures, the church, or in Jesus himself. This equip forum is \$5 and seats are limited. You can sign up for both the MOG class and the reconstructing faith forum at mercycharlotte.com/news.

Today we will be in the book of John 1:35-51. We are going to see the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. So, what we have seen thus far in the book is that John is claiming that Jesus is God and that he's come to save the world. And then, we see John the Baptist saw last week that he wasn't the Messiah and that the point of his ministry was to point everyone to the one who would come after him and that he would be the lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world. And now... when Jesus' ministry is about to start! Yes. And you know what he does. He finds some people to do some viral marketing, to get the word of mouth out about him and his preaching circuit. And he made sure to tell everyone not to worry because there would be "Jesus is my homeboy" t-shirts given to the first 100 people through

the gates... Is this how he started? No! Jesus didn't need conferences, lights, and smoke shows to make himself more appealing. Jesus was the greatest preacher in history, yet he only preached occasionally. Why? Seems like if you're the greatest preacher ever, it would be most effective to do a preaching circuit. But that wasn't Jesus' goal. Jesus' goal was to invest in a few faithful men and women who would be able to carry on the mission after he left. His goal was to invest in 12 men really deeply. Why, because they needed to be ready to carry on the mission without him.

And today, we get to see the beginnings of what would turn into a world-wide mission that has reached even us today. We're going to see the story of Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel. We're going to see his invitation to come and be with him and their invitation to other to "come and see Jesus". He invited them into his presence and into an intimate relationship with him. And Jesus did this one by one with these disciples and invited them to be with him. He knew that the most important thing for them was to be near him. Y'all that was true for us, wasn't it? We were invited into a relationship with Jesus and when we came to him and saw who he was, it changed us. Someone invited us to come and see Jesus



and what we realized is that he knows us. I mean really knows us. One of the things about Jesus is that he somehow knows everything about us even the deep dark secrets that we hold and the dark places in our hearts and we know that he knows and somehow... He still loves us. And he likes us. And he calls us to come and to see. That's what love is, right? Being fully known and understood, and you're still loved and desired. God picks us. And today we get to see 4 examples of Jesus doing this with people that he knows, but they don't know him yet. But they will, and it will change everything!

Let me pray.

³⁵ The next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. ³⁸ When Jesus turned and noticed them following him, he asked them, "What are you looking for?"

Okay, we start here with John the Baptist commenting again about who Jesus is. The previous day (which was what Joseph Anderson preached on last week) John said something similar to his disciples, He said, "Here is the

Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). And after hearing this, John's disciples start to follow Jesus. Which is great because this was the whole purpose of John the Baptists ministry. It was to point people toward following Jesus. So, they heard him say again the next day, look, right there is the Lamb of God. And they left to go and see Jesus. And when he saw them following him, he asked them, "What are you looking for?" Let me pause here. This is a great question! For many of us, it's the question.

1. Jesus knows our motivations.

These two disciples start walking behind Jesus and he asks them a question. "What are you looking for?" Jesus asked questions like this a lot in the gospels. Why? It's because Jesus knows that following him doesn't start with a change in our behavior, it Jesus wants it to start with a change of our hearts. That's why Jesus' questions are often so pointed. He's trying to get to the heart with these two men. Examples of this are all over the Bible. God asks Adam and eve a question after they sinned against him. They sinned against God and when they heard God walking in the Garden, they hid in shame. So, God called out to Adam and said, "Where are you?"



Now, did he know the answer to his question, of course he did! He knows everything. He asked them this question so that they would see and feel that they used to walk with God in the cool of the day, but now they are afraid and hiding from the one they thought they'd never hide from. He wanted them to feel and see the reality of where their sin had taken them. They were hiding in a bush from their loving creator. Later in Matthews gospel, Jesus asked the disciples "who do you say that I am?" He knew who he was. He didn't need to be affirmed in his Godness. He wanted them to confess it with their mouths showing that they were willing cast down everything to follow him. He wanted to get to the heart. In John 5 we see that there is an invalid and he's been that way for 38 years and Jesus goes and asks him a wild question. "Do you want to be well?" I mean, c'mon, Jesus! Of course, he wants to be healed. It sounds almost insensitive, doesn't it? Well as the story goes, Jesus heals him, and everyone starts asking the man how this happened, and He kept saying "I don't know where he went." Jesus had slipped away before the crowds came. And he found this man in the temple and said, "See, you are well. Sin no more. So that nothing worse may happen to you." Jesus' first question to this man was to show him that there are

more important things than to be healed physically. He needed to be healed spiritually!

Jesus asked questions like this to get to their hearts. And as we jump back in our story, we see that the two disciples that started to follow Jesus had great motivations. They wanted to follow and to be with him. ³⁸ When Jesus turned and noticed them following him, he asked them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" They called him Rabbi. This was basically their DTR moment with Jesus. They wanted to make it clear to Jesus the kind of relationship they wanted to have. So, they called him Rabbi. In these days, people would seek out Rabbi's and would ask these Rabbi's if they could follow them and the Rabbi would decide on whether or not he wanted to give his time to mentor the one asking. So, they are telling Jesus based on what John the Baptist is saying is that "hey, we want to follow you." ³⁹ "Come and you'll see," he replied. So, they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon.

So, Jesus, knowing that the best thing for these men was for them to just come and be with him. He wanted them



to experience who he was. He wanted them to experience in him what he wanted them to do with others one day. They would soon start to call others to come and meet Jesus. So, he began to model for them what they were to do with others. What a great model of evangelism and discipleship. So, they spend the day with Jesus!

⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed him. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated "the Christ"), ⁴² and he brought Simon to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, he said, "You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which is translated "Peter").

I love this. The first thing Andrew thought was to find his brother. "We have found the messiah", he told him. He loved his brother and wanted to take him to Jesus I love this! Y'all family dynamics are tough. But Andrew didn't care. I didn't matter what happened before. He found the messiah. Now he didn't fully understand what all of this meant. I mean there were some political thoughts that the Jews had in relation to what they thought the messiah would do. They thought that he would

overthrow Rome and that he would be this warrior king. But Jesus didn't come to take over political parties, he came to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth. Andrew didn't know much, but he knew that he needed to get his brother to Jesus. And then when he finally brought him to Jesus in verse 42... When Jesus saw him, he said, "You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which is translated "Peter").

2. Jesus knows who we are and who he will make us to be.

When Jesus saw him is told him who he was. You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas, which is Aramaic for "Rock." Simon Peter didn't know it yet, but he would become one of the most important leaders in the early church. But, at this moment. He was an idiot. We see from other gospel stores that Peter is impulsive, he has anger issues, he has a huge mouth. I mean Peter is the furthest thing from a rock that you could find. He had no idea all that God had in store for him. And Jesus would one day tell him in Matthew 16:18: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." In Acts 2, one Peter was filled



with the Holy Spirit, he preached the first Christian sermon ever and 3000 people gave their lives to Jesus.

This isn't the first time that God renamed someone. Jesus wasn't doing a strange party trick. Like, "Hey Simon. I know who you are but I'm gonna give you a nickname. Oh, I'm gonna call you rock." Weird party move Jesus. He did the same thing with Abram, when he renamed him, Abraham indicating his covenant promise to him and that he would be a father to many nations. God saw something more for him. The change of name indicated his new identity. He did the same thing with Jacob. God changed Jacob's name to Israel. Jacob was a deceiver, but he wrestled with God and prevailed. And he became the father of the tribes of the nation of Israel. God's people! God would often change people's names indicating a special calling that he has for their lives.

And God does the same with us! Before following Jesus, we were enemies. In Christ, we're children. Apart from him, lost and in Christ we are found. He took our sin and now he calls us "the very righteousness of God." Do you view yourself like that? God has a plan for you. Yes, we are saved unto him, and we will be with the Lord forever in Glory, but while you're here, right now... God has a

plan for you. And his plan is for you to do what he did. Like Jesus, we are sent on a mission. His mission is our mission. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. We are to go and introduce people to him. Come and see. In Fact, the Apostle Paul, who was once a terrorist of the church, comments on this by calling our new identity as an "Ambassador". 2 Corinthians 5:20: **Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: "Be reconciled to God."**

God's plan for every one of us is to adopt us, call us children, and bring us onto his mission alongside of him. But maybe you're like Peter. You know you're a mess. Thinking there's no way God would have a plan for you. Not true! And guess what?! All of us are a mess. Every last one of us. All being a mess means is that you're a great candidate for his grace.

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and told him, "Follow me."⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter.

Now we see Philip. And Philip's story of how he came to Jesus was that Jesus just found him. That's it. Nothing



crazy. That's it. This is the kind of testimony I want for my kids. So, how did you come to faith. Jesus found me. No crazy story! Simple. And the lie that people like Philip believe is that since their story isn't more like Peter who was a mess or more like Paul's who was a murderer, or Mary who battled demons that God can't use you. Not true! Philip had a normal story, and you know what he became in the book of Acts? The called him Philip the evangelist. The one who'd share with the Ethiopian eunuch who would take the gospel to Africa! It doesn't take a crazy story to be credible in sharing Christ! It doesn't take a crazy story. All it takes is love. When you talk about Jesus to people does a smile come across your face? Does it seem like you adore him? People are drawn to lovers of God. Why? It doesn't make sense to them.

God knew the plan he had for Philip. To be an evangelist in his kingdom. But, as with young Christians. He is on fire for Jesus and starts to share and what he does is pretty funny. ⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and told him, "Follow me."⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth."

This story reminds me of when I was in High School. Our church had a pastor that was a really gifted evangelist in Miami and we had some high school kids start to come to faith from some pretty rough backgrounds. We had many gang members start to come to faith from different gangs. Even rival gangs. We had Latin Kings and Crips coming to faith and were now worshipping next to each other at church. It was unreal. Well, one day we went to go to the movies, all of us together and we were all young believers and we saw some kids from my high school that were from similar gang backgrounds, so these guys looked at me and said, "I have to go share with these kids." So, they ran up on them and said "Alright, listen up mothers. Do you know Jesus? And then right in front of the movie theatre they start to open air preach to anyone that would listen that Jesus saved them. Now, was all of it theologically, correct? No! Was there a lot of profanity laced in their gospel presentation, yes! But they had known Jesus for 4 days at that point. We hadn't gotten to that part in our discipleship. And all these kids started to come to faith. You looked around and people were in tears. They didn't know everything, but they knew that they loved Jesus.



Philip was similar. He got some things wrong in his presentation to Nathaniel. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth.” Now a lot of things were right about what he said. Jesus was who Moses wrote about in the law, and also in the prophets. But he said, and he’s from Nazareth. Which is true but, there aren’t any prophecies that say anything about Nazareth. And that he was Joseph’s son. He didn’t mention that he was God’s son. Likely, because he didn’t fully understand that yet. But God starts to honor his heart.

⁴⁶ “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael asked him. “Come and see,” Philip answered.

3. Jesus sees us in our doubt.

As we will see in a minute. Nathaniel was a bit of a skeptic, and he picked up on the information that didn’t quite add up in Philip’s presentation of Jesus. He said can anything good come out of Nazareth? He was skeptical and doubtful because nothing was ever written about Nazareth. None of the prophecies ever mentions Nazareth. And also... also Nazareth?! C’mon. That town is

tiny! And a lot of them are Greeks! Scholars say that he had prejudice against the people in that town. How could the messiah come from a town with those people. That can’t be true! Wouldn’t it be just like God to send his son to come from an insignificant town filled with non-ethnic Jews, in order to one day send his disciples to one day go after the people they were prejudiced against. God wants all people. Ha! God’s playing cosmic chess while were playing checkers. God had and still has a heart for all cultures. That’s why we want Mercy Church look like God’s kingdom. People from all cultures and ethnic backgrounds. That honors God! That’s why we want to send people as missionaries all over the world! That honors God!

So, Nathaniel skeptically asked Philip can anything good come out of Nazareth? And he was just like, you know what... Just come and see! So many of us want to know how to answer the questions of skeptics perfectly. And in my experience, and I don’t mean this in a braggy way, but as someone with the gift of evangelism I have answered skeptics questions pretty well through the years. For many skeptics, it’s not that they need their questions answered. I’ve seen that done that with probably hundreds of skeptics. What they needed was to



experience Jesus. Because when you get people in front of Jesus, their questions fall to the ground. It doesn't matter anymore. That's why when you share your faith, one of the most important things you can do with them is to get them to read God's word. Maybe that's your next step. Just ask them if they would read the Bible with you. And when they read about Jesus and experience who he is, their questions seem less and less important. And as Philip brings Nathaniel to Jesus the same thing will happen to him! His questions and doubts will fall to the ground ... Look at this.

⁴⁷ Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." ⁴⁸ "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you," Jesus answered.

Now remember, Jesus had never met him before. But Jesus knew him! And there is so much in these few verses that are mind blowing. And you'll see what Nathaniel quits doubting in a bit. You see, Jesus' first words sound a little odd. Remember verse 47 "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." Which sounds odd. What is he saying? Is he simply saying that he doesn't look like

the kind of guy that would be a liar. No. Well, another faithful way to translate this passage from the original language is... "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no Jacob." Jacob's name in the Old Testament means deceiver. He deceived people all the time, so he was appropriately named that. Which peaked Nathaniel's interest so he responded with, how do you know me? And then Jesus said: "before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." And y'all I didn't know this until I started researching for this sermon, but do you know what Jewish Rabbi's called skeptics back then? I don't really know how this got started. But do you know what they called them? They called them "people who sit under the fig tree." Oh, yeah, he's sitting under the fig tree right now. Jesus said this because Nathaniel was in fact sitting under the fig tree. And he was struggling and trying to figure out how to get right with God, to figure out the best way to get to God. And Jesus called that out and said, yes, Nathaniel. I saw you literally under the fig tree. And I saw you struggling and doubting in turmoil trying to figure this all out. I saw, Nathaniel.

And Nathaniel responds by calling him his Rabbi, look at it with me in verse ⁴⁹ "Rabbi," Nathanael replied, "You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!"⁵⁰ Jesus



responded to him, “Do you believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? Pause...So Nathaniel starts to believe, and he calls him the Son of God. Which is true! And then Jesus responds with... do you only believe because I told you that I saw you struggling under that fig tree? Do you only believe because of there was no possible way that I could have known? Is that why you believe? And then what he says next is truly amazing. Not only did Jesus show Nathaniel his omniscience. By that, that he’s all knowing. Its waaaaay better than that Nathaniel. You will see greater things than this.”⁵¹ Then he said, “Truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

Do you know what this means? Jesus is quoting Genesis 28. It’s a story of about Jacob the deceiver... Remember, he called Nathaniel the deceiver, Jacob. Read this with me in Genesis 28:10 **10** Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. **11** He reached a certain place and spent the night there because the sun had set. He took one of the stones from the place, put it there at his head, and lay down in that place. **12** And he dreamed: A stairway was set on the ground with its top reaching the sky, and God’s angels were going up and down on

it. **13** The LORD was standing there beside him,^[a] saying, “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your offspring the land on which you are lying. **14** Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out toward the west, the east, the north, and the south. All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. **15** Look, I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.” **17** He was afraid and said, “What an awesome place this is! This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven.”

And as the story goes Jacob set up a stone of remembrance in this place. Jacob had thought that he had found the path to heaven. This is the place where we can access God and eternal life with God. And a Jesus is standing with Nathaniel, he tells him You will see greater things than this.”⁵¹ Then he said, “Truly I tell you, you will



see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

Don't you get it, church! Jesus is telling Nathaniel that he was the path to heaven! That he was the way to get to get right with God. In the context of the passage most likely Nathaniel was sitting under the fig tree literally and spiritually. Struggling to figure out how to get right with God and the scholars say he was probably reading this passage. And Jesus met him in his doubt and in his struggle saying you are not Jacob. You are Nathaniel. And I see you. And you've been trying to figure it out the path to heaven and Nathaniel don't you see. You are going to see greater things that miracles. You're going to see that that I am the way, the truth and the life. No one will come to the father except through him.

So, to the doubters, to the skeptic. God knew Nathaniel all along! He knew is struggle, and doubt. He knew where he was sitting and even the passage of scripture he was reading. He knows you. So... like Philip did. I invite you to come and see. Yes, come with your questions, come with your concerns, Jesus isn't afraid of them. One of the reasons I love this passage is because we can see ourselves in these people. Jesus knows our motivations.

He sees our hearts and he knows and understands. Jesus knows who we are and who he will make us to be, and he sees us in our doubt.

I don't know about you, but I've been saved by this Jesus. Jesus knew me when I was a mess. A foot in church and a foot in the world. He knew my mess and by his grace nearly took my life in college. I almost died, yet he saved me from death. And he gave me a story to tell. And I want to live my life to tell everyone to come and see Jesus! If you are in Christ this morning. Jesus knows your family members like this. He knows your co-workers like this. Why do you think you're related to your family if it's not to tell them to come and see. Why do you share an office with the person you do if it's not for you to tell them to come and see. Why are you feeling that tug in your heart to take the gospel to the ends of the earth to people groups who have no access to this Jesus? Church, Jesus is God! He is it. He's the answer. Let us bring people at work, at the playground, at preschool, your barber, if you're like Rashard whoever does your pedicure. It doesn't matter. Invite them to come and see Jesus.

Let's pray!