



Second Sunday after the Epiphany
14 January 2024

Ascension Lutheran Church
Pastor Chris

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." ⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸ Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." ⁴⁹ Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰ Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹ And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, ^[a] you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Who introduced you to Jesus? Who brought you to the waters of baptism? Who dragged you to Sunday School? Who did you sit by in church as a child?

I sat with my grandfather every Sunday in church from the time I was old enough to sit quietly in church. My mom, dad, and grandma all sang in the choir and at that church that meant they sat in the choir loft. I sat with Grandpa in the pew. And he sang from the pew, loudly, almost always offkey, but he sang.

Who introduced you to the example of Jesus? Who shared with you what it meant to be loved for who you are without condition? Who sat with you through a difficult time? Who prayed for you when you were sick? Who brought you a meal while you were taking care of a loved one? Who visited you? Who brought you laughter in a moment of deep grief? Who invited you to come to church?

I learned about Jesus' love from a pastor I met in 2nd grade when we moved to a new church. Up until 2nd grade, I do not remember ever being noticed by a pastor. But when we moved to our new church, Pastor John made me feel just as important as my parents, as if I mattered. Later on, I realized Pastor John made me feel seen.

A couple of weeks ago, I received an email from a woman looking for a new church with an active children's ministry. She asked what we might offer for her 11-year-old. I replied to her email with a greeting and began to explain the different ministries we offer: BLAST, JOLT, CRASH. It occurred to me I should probably unpack the acronyms – otherwise we sound a little bit explosive in our ministry. And although we have a lot to offer here at Ascension, I cannot share with this woman or anyone else who asks about the ministry at Ascension, that they will be seen – especially the children. Come and see.

Every story of Jesus leads us down the road from Jesus meeting someone to Jesus meeting their deepest need. Whatever their deepest need was, Jesus meets it.

The Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28): Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly." Jesus did not answer a word. So, his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." "Yes, it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." Come and see.



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The Roman centurion (Luke 7:1-10): The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, “This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.” So, Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: “Lord, don’t trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.” Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well. Come and see.

The woman at the well (John 4): When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.” Come and see.

The sick man at the Bethesda pool (John 5:1-9): Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” Come and see.

The thief crucified next to Jesus (Luke 23:40-43): Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” Come and see.

Whatever their deepest need was, Jesus meets it. Then they tell others what happened.

One of my professors in Seminary shared these words with his students: “Our task as Christians is not to “prove” the truth of the Christian faith, although many scholars have written persuasively of the truth of Christianity. Our task is not even to persuade others to become Christian. Our task is to say, “Come and see.” Amen.