

Come and See

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Now, I don't know if we have any Greek speakers with us this morning. I can fumble my way through Greek on a good day. The New Testament, the second part of the Bible where we are this morning, is written in Greek. So one patient teacher has spent a lot of time trying to teach me to read it. And not for any want of skill or charisma on John Angus's part, I often reach the end of the class thinking it's all Greek to me. But in the passage we just read, there's a Greek word I think we all know, the word of finding and discovery, the word eureka. Eureka, I've found it.

Okay, if John Angus were here this morning, he'd have a few things to say at that point. But it is the same word. Three times we see this word finding. Verse 43, Jesus finding Philip. Then further down, Philip found Nathanael and he said to him, we have found the one, the one promised by God through Moses and the prophets, Jesus of Nazareth. Now, while none of them actually shout eureka, this passage has that whole air of finding and discovery, of new recognition. There's a freshness to it. The penny has dropped because Jesus is finding the lost and the lost are finding Jesus. And so we could say this is a eureka moment for these men. We have found the promised one. In a lot of ways, lots of threads in this passage run through from our passage last week. We see the unlikely power of personal witness.

And we see more of who Jesus is, his true identity. But the main difference is really in the response. See that in verse 46. Jesus from Nazareth? Can anything good come from there? You hear we see a man, Nathanael, who has serious doubts and questions. He's skeptical, we might say. But crucially, he is open to coming and seeing for himself. And he does have a eureka moment of his own, but first he needs convincing.

Perhaps we this morning can think of people we know who reserve judgment on Jesus, like Nathanael. Let me come and find out. Perhaps you yourself have your doubts this morning. Jesus? Really?

Or perhaps this morning you're just beginning to ask questions about who God is, who Jesus might be. Well, if that's you, let me say how good it is that you are here. And how good it is that we are all here together. Because this morning, God invites us in his word, whoever we are, to come and see.

[3 : 1 6] Come and see Jesus for yourself. And as we go through, we're going to see three things this morning. Firstly, we see where we find Jesus. Where we find Jesus. Could you read with me again from verse 43?

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. So Philip is found by Jesus. Then Philip finds Nathanael and tells him, we have found the one. And notice there, he says, we, plural, have found. He doesn't say, I have found.

It is a personal discovery. But it's not a discovery that he has made on his own. He has found Jesus with others. Probably Andrew and Peter. We're told that they're all from the same town together. So there's that personal contact and connection again. We know that we don't follow Jesus on our own. We follow him in the community of the church. But equally, nobody finds Jesus on their own either. Our own stories teach us that, don't they? I wonder who it was who first told you about the Lord Jesus. Who first helped you to come and see him and find him. Think of that person.

Perhaps it was a friend. Perhaps a parent or a grandparent. Maybe someone from your church growing up. Or a co-worker. Or somebody from the place where you lived. It doesn't matter who, but it was someone. And probably in the end, lots of people. A church, a family together. That's why it's so good for us to think ourselves of simple ways that we can invite our non-Christian friends and neighbors to meet our Christian brothers and sisters. Because very often, it is meeting other Christians and getting to know other Christians that people come to know Christ himself. Nobody finds Jesus on their own. But now, Philip goes and he finds someone else. See how that ripple of good news spreads?

And Philip told Nathaniel, we have found the one. So, we find Jesus together in the church. We also find Jesus in the testimony of people who saw him, who were there. And I've kind of pressed that point the last couple of weeks. Because John presses that on us. It's so vital for our faith that we know that what we believe about Jesus really happened. It really did. But I don't want to pause here on the power of witness too long this morning. Because actually, what Philip says takes us on even further than that. See, who does Philip say that they have found in verse 45? Who have they found?

[6 : 38] We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law and who the prophets also wrote about. See that? So, the truth about Jesus is not only here in the church. It's not only here for us in the New Testament. So, the truth about Jesus runs all the way back through the Old Testament, through the writings of Moses and the prophets. The whole Bible, from beginning to end, is about him.

That's what Philip has realized. Now, in my Bible at home, I counted earlier this week, my Old Testament covers 1,267 pages. And the New Testament is only 318 pages. There are 929 chapters in the Old Testament and only 260 chapters in the New Testament. So, I say that to point out that most of our Bible is Old Testament is Old Testament. So, what do we do with most of our Bible if we don't find Jesus there? You have one early heretic called Marcion. He wanted to take the whole Old Testament out of the Christian Bible because he believed that the God who we find in the Old Testament was totally different from the God that we find in Jesus. Now, I hope none of us go that far, okay, tearing pages out of our Bibles. But what do we do with the Old Testament? If you were to close your Bible and just look down the pages, I wonder which sections are the most kind of heavily thumbed and creased and torn with use.

And which sections are still nice and clean and less well used, maybe? Or even if we read through our Old Testament every single year, what do we do with the Old Testament spiritually? Where does it take us? You know, maybe one morning this week, you opened up your Bible and your reading plan said Leviticus chapter 11. Okay, and as you read the lists of clean and unclean animals, you wondered what on earth a rock badger was and what it ever did to end up in the list of unclean animals and why that is even in the Bible. Now, those are fine thoughts and questions to have, okay, but what Philip says here means that if we are reading through any part of our Bible and we don't find ourselves on a path that leads us to Jesus, then we have not yet understood what we are reading. Okay, listen to what Jesus says to people who loved the Bible a little bit further on in John's Gospel in chapter 5.

He says, you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

See, he's speaking to guys who knew their Old Testament back to front, but if they were not finding him in their Old Testament, then they had not understood the Old Testament at all.

[9 : 57] So, how does the Old Testament get us to Jesus? Well, sometimes, you know, we can read our Old Testament and look for specific prophecies about Jesus that get us to him, but that way of reading the Old Testament is a little bit like trying to find Wally in the book Where's Wally? Okay, we look for him on every page, but he's kind of tucked away in a corner or behind a detail. We have to look very carefully, very hard, but Jesus says actually every passage points us to him. There's no part of our Bible where he is not. For example, what do rock badgers have to do with Jesus? Well, in the system of clean and unclean foods, God was teaching his people in the past what a pure and holy God he is, and how clean and pure and holy we have to be to come before him. But when Jesus came, he told us the problem with being unclean isn't actually on the outside of us, what we eat. So, it's actually on the inside of us, what comes out of us. For out of our hearts comes all kinds of sin, says Jesus.

How then can we come to God being unclean on the inside? Well, Jesus points us to himself as the holy one who can bring us to God, who can clean away the uncleanness in our hearts.

See, getting to Jesus from the Old Testament isn't like looking for clues. It's more like opening a long, long story, full of twists and turns and ups and downs. And just when you think it might start to get better, the problem and the conflict only gets worse. But finally, after reading and reading, after so many disappointed dreams and hopes on hold and pending promises, the story reaches its climax in a hero. A hero who answers every hope, who is the yes to every promise. And he solves even the really hard and the dark bits of the story. And for all the points that we have thought, there can't possibly be a way back to God. Well, now our hero says, I am the way. I am the way. He is where all the loose threads of the Bible come together. The whole Bible is his story.

All foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken, says Jesus in Luke chapter 24. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures, all the scriptures, the things concerning himself. It said of the English pastor, Charles Spurgeon, that he once criticized the sermon because the preacher hadn't gotten to Jesus.

And the preacher answered, well, Jesus wasn't in the text. But no matter where you are in England, said Spurgeon, there's a road to London. So wherever we are in our Bibles, there is a path to Jesus.

[13 : 28] So friends, where do we find Jesus? Well, we find Jesus on every page of our Bibles. We find Jesus on every page of our Bibles. So if you are in the Bible, you'll see him in the Bible.

You'll see him in the Bible. It's a problem that I've had. It's a problem that lots of Christians have. Maybe you struggle with the Old Testament, with its history and its genealogies and its violence.

But please never feel like you're on your own with that. If you're struggling with reading your Bible, please come and speak to someone. We can study and pray. We can read a book. Do you get involved in one of the Bible studies we have here at the church, the neighborhood fellowships that Anne mentioned? I was here at the church earlier in the week and was part of a great study led by one of our elders here on Psalm 145. And we saw the Lord Jesus in that Psalm, and it was wonderful because the Bible for us is full of fresh discovery. Perhaps you can remember in your own life those eureka moments, seeing Jesus for the first time in a psalm or a story or in a new way. Those are precious times for us, aren't they? But with the Bible, there are always more discoveries to make, always new things to find, because it is a living book breathed out by God to point us to our King and Rescuer.

We learn to love our Bibles when we learn to read it as the story of the one we love, Jesus of Nazareth. And so once we've found him in our Bibles then, how do we come to him? How do we come to the Lord Jesus? Well, look at Nathanael's reaction to Philip's great discovery in verse 46.

Nazareth? Can anything good come from there? Nathanael asked. He cannot believe Jesus could be the one because he's from Nazareth. This is a bit like saying, come and meet Joe Biden, okay, the president of the USA. He's going to be this weekend in his hometown of Arbroath.

[15 : 42] Okay, now Arbroath is a lovely town, but to think that the president of the United States might come from Arbroath, you would be thinking, really? What? Now, he doesn't. Okay, but that's the kind of disbelief in Nathanael's mind when Philip says the one the prophets wrote about comes from Nazareth.

Nazareth gets a bit of a hard time from preachers for being a bit of a dump. Clearly, there was some stigma attached to it, but all we really have to go on is what Nathanael actually says here.

We don't know why he thinks that Nazareth was such a rough place. And John is going to qualify that statement later anyway by telling us that ultimately Jesus comes from heaven. But for now, faced with the Jesus of history, Jesus of history, Jesus of Nazareth, Nathanael cannot get his head around it.

Now, this is sometimes what's called a defeater belief. Nathanael's thinking is if nothing good can come from Nazareth, then how can Jesus from Nazareth be good? A defeater belief is one belief that means that another belief cannot possibly be true. An example of that today might be Jesus cannot have come back from the dead because death is the end. Or Christianity can't be good because the church has done terrible things in the past. Beliefs that kind of block people from even considering the possibility that Jesus is who he says he is. 50 or 100 years ago, Christianity seemed obvious to obvious to people, even if they weren't Christians. But as our society gets further and further away from its Christian past, there will be more and more beliefs that make Jesus seem unbelievable. But don't lose heart because Nathanael shows us that that is not strange and bizarre.

Okay, our friends that struggle with the claims of Jesus are not the first, and they won't be the last. So what do we say to our friends who are skeptical, who say they can't believe?

[18 : 04] Or Philip's answer is brilliant. Come and see, said Philip. Come and see. He doesn't have to go away and read five books about history and philosophy and ethics to have something to say to Nathanael. Don't mishear me. You know, that can be helpful to read up on our stuff.

Knowing our stuff is good and apologetics has its place. Sometimes there's a place for a good back and forth with somebody. We're to give a reason for the hope that we have. But we don't have to have all the answers. Because sometimes the simplest answer is the best answer. Come and see.

Come and see for yourself who Jesus is. We need the humility to recognize that the questions our friends have aren't ultimately questions for us. They're questions for Jesus himself.

We can give our answers, but our friends ultimately need to hear from him. So let him speak for himself. Let him show us who he is. Let him do the talking because he is the one who opens blind eyes. Come and see. Come and meet my Christian friends. Come and read a gospel with me.

Come to church with me on Sunday. Come and see Jesus for yourself. It's a wonderful answer that shows that Jesus truly is all we have to offer to an unbelieving world.

[19 : 41] And Nathanael does come and see, doesn't he? Verse 47, when Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.

See, Jesus commends Nathanael on his honesty, on his integrity. Nathanael still had questions and doubts in his mind, but he's got an open mind.

His doubts don't stop him from coming and seeing Jesus for himself. So if you're here this morning and you're not sure yet about Jesus, let me commend you for that.

It's great that you're here. It's brilliant because that is how we must come to Jesus. Honestly. Honest about our struggles. Honest about our need to find out who he is.

But let's have Jesus. Let's let him surprise us also. Look with me at verse 43. How do you know me? Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.

[20 : 50] See, why do we ever come to find Jesus? We come to find him because he first came to find us.

Nathanael is under the impression that he is coming to Jesus on his own. But then Jesus tells him that he saw him before Philip even came to speak with him.

Even Philip, who said we have found the one, was first found by Jesus. See, we all came seeking Jesus. But we only came because Jesus was seeking us.

He knew us long before we knew him. So we can come to him openly and honestly, not hiding from him.

Because if we are coming to see him for who he is with an honest and good heart, it is because he has already come and seen and known us.

[21 : 52] You, perhaps this morning, that was more than you were expecting from Jesus. But he is the one who describes himself as the good shepherd. The one who leaves the 99 to go after the one who is lost.

And it is because of Jesus' awesome knowledge and compassion and love that Nathanael says of him in verse 49, Rabbi, you are the son of God. You are the king of Israel.

He comes and sees for himself that Jesus is the promised rescuer and king from God. He sees Jesus for who he truly is.

So do you see him today? Are you coming to see him? Whoever you are, come and see. Come and see. Simple words, but with such power.

Because they bring us to the one who came to seek and to save the lost. So we have seen where we find Jesus and how we come to Jesus.

[22 : 59] But finally, what do we see in Jesus? What do we see in Jesus? Look with me at verse 50. 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.

Nathanael took a while to be convinced. But once he believed, Jesus can still say, You haven't seen anything yet. What's better than being known by Jesus?

Well, it's knowing who Jesus truly is. That's what we see as we come to the end of chapter 1 of John's Gospel.

That strange picture of heaven being opened and the angels going up and down. It comes from a dream in Genesis chapter 28. Remember Jacob?

[24 : 02] The father of the 12 tribes of Israel was sleeping. And as he slept, he saw a ladder stretching from heaven to earth with angels going up and down on it. But it wasn't Jacob's ladder.

It was God's ladder. Because God appeared to Jacob and confirmed his promises to him. And when Jacob woke up, he said, Surely the Lord is in this place.

And I did not know it. This is none other than the house of God. And this is the gate of heaven. Well, now Jesus is saying, We will see heaven opened and the angels of God going up and down on him.

Because he is where heaven meets earth. He's saying, When we understand who he truly is, we too will say of him, He is none other than the house of God.

He is the gate of heaven. This is the first time Jesus begins something by saying very truly. Jesus, who spoke only truth, is saying, This is very true.

[25 : 08] You can double depend on this. You can take this to the bank. When you come and know and see me, you have come to know and see God.

The used there in verse 51 are plural. Jesus is no longer just speaking to Nathanael, but to the watching audience across the world and down through the centuries.

To use a phrase from theater, he's broken the fourth wall to speak to you this morning. If we come to him, we will see him for who he is.

And when we see him, let our response be, Surely the Lord is in this place, in this man, in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so as we come to the end of this first chapter of John's Gospel, let me leave us with this.

If we're Christians, then we know Jesus. We're familiar with him. We're close to him. We know the stories about him. That's vital. But we can get too familiar, can't we?

[26 : 17] The Gospels can start to feel old and worn. We can start to think there's nothing left for us to learn here. But don't let Jesus ever stop surprising you.

Don't ever think he can't show you something new of himself or something you've always known, but in a new way. It's said at the beginning of this passage, it's full of an air of discovery, of finding afresh.

And I was really challenged by that in the comfort of my study. When was the last time I read my Bible and my heart said, Eureka! I found him.

When was the last time I saw Jesus and inwardly fell before him in awe of simply who he is? When was the last time I fell freshly in love with the Lord Jesus Christ?

Remember that freshness, the excitement of the days when you had just committed your life to him. If that's you this morning, cherish that, embrace that.

[27 : 22] Because we know that feeling fades as we walk with the Lord Jesus through the months and the years of life. But even as the freshness of that discovery wears off, let us never lose the love for him that we had at first.

A friend of mine sometimes compares reading the Bible to eating a meal. Sometimes he says it's like eating a Michelin star steak.

It's the best thing you've ever eaten. Can you savor every bite? But sometimes he says it's like eating leftover soup. And you just have to eat it to stay alive.

His point is, not every time we open the Bible is going to be a Eureka moment. If we think it is, we'll be quickly disappointed. Sometimes we simply need to read it to stay alive.

But the flip side to that is, let's never get so used to the leftover soup that we lose the taste for the Michelin star steak. Let's never get to the point where we stop expecting that something in our Bibles is going to blow us away and ignite our hearts and leave us speechless before the Lord Jesus.

[28 : 37] Rather, let the times we meet with Jesus be times of fresh discovery and realization and seeing afresh his greatness and his majesty and beauty.

So let's pray for ourselves for each other that we would discover him afresh in every book of the Bible and that seeing him our hearts would cry out, I've found him.

For we have found Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. Let's pray that together now. Let's pray. Let's pray. God, our Father, how we thank you that you have sought and found us.

How we thank you that you have opened our blind eyes to see the Lord Jesus for who he is. Lord, how we thank you that when we were lost and far away, you were looking for us and you saw us.

And Lord, we pray that as we open our Bibles day by day that you would show us more of the Lord Jesus. Our walk with him would be a fresh walk.

[29 : 49] Lord, keep us alive in him, we pray. Lord, if we do not as yet know him and if we have not as yet seen him for who he is and trusted him, Lord, would you bring our hearts to see him and to know him, to love him, to trust him, to walk with him, to follow him.

For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.