

Sermon – 17 January 2021

John 1:43 – to the end. The Calling of Nathaniel

It is often said of someone that they are searching for something and then at some point in time they find the hopeful future that they are looking for.

We see something this going on in our reading where Jesus at the start of his ministry calls Nathaniel to be one of his followers.

Jesus has seen Nathaniel from a distance and can tell that he wants to be part of a more hopeful future. Jesus tells him that by following him he can be part of something that is far better. This is a hopeful message and gives Nathaniel something to hope for.

You could say that he is being asked to project that hope into his future and then walk in the light of that hope.

We get a glimpse of what that hope can mean for Nathaniel and all future followers of Christ from these words from the Prologue to John's Gospel.

***'Jesus was in the world; but the world, though it owed its being to him, did not recognise him. He entered into his own realm, and his own would not receive him. But to all who did receive him, to those who have yielded him their allegiance, he gave the right to become children of God, not born of any human stock, or by the fleshly desire of a human father, but the offspring of God himself.'*(Words from the New English Bible).**

We know very little of what happened to Nathaniel after his conversation with Jesus. Other gospels call him Bartholomew so it is thought that Nathaniel and Bartholomew are one and the same person. Some say his ministry took him to India and Armenia. In the second century, someone calling himself Eusebius is said to have found in "India" a Gospel of St Matthew written in Hebrew and left behind by Bartholomew.

Incidentally, we do have a stained glass window at St Giles showing Jesus talking to Nathaniel. Something for you to look out for when you are next in St Giles.

So what can Nathaniel's story tell us today in the midst of a seemingly unending pandemic?

The hopeful words said to Nathaniel can equally now be said to us . If we say "Yes" to them, then we can reflect on these words from the hymn 'All my hope on God is founded'.

***'Christ shall call one and all . You who follow shall not fall
Evermore from his store new worlds rise and adore
But God's power hour by hour is my temple and my tower'***

And these hopeful words can take you into this reflection by St John Henry Newman

'God has created me to do Him some definite Service. He has committed some work to me he has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do his work.... He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide the future from me- still He knows what he is about.'

All of these words help us to journey through the season of Epiphany where we are all asked to continue to give birth to our faith journey so it can be passed onto those who are to come into it after us.

And as we continue the work of giving birth to our faith journey we continue to see that with its message of new life and hope it is an eternally hopeful one.

It was Sir John Betjeman who once said

***Mondays are so much worse for those who haven't any hope
Faith, hope and charity. O give me hope***

**Jonathan Slater
Licensed Lay Minister (Reader)
St Giles Church Bramhope**