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Encounters with Jesus
Jesus Calls Apprentices II
John 1:43-51

Last week in our *Encounters with Jesus* sermon we took a look at when Jesus calls apprentices. Today is a sequel to that. We are going to continue on in that same passage we looked at from John chapter 1. Last week we saw a few things from the calling of Jesus' first apprentices.

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1. Jesus calls ordinary people

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 2. Apprentices follow their Master

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 3. Apprentices learn to have a theology of **ABUNDANCE NOT scarcity**

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 4. Apprentices bring others to Jesus

[6]

 5. Jesus gives apprentices a new identity

These principles are some foundational truths out of which we must live as followers of Jesus. Remember in Acts when Paul was on Mars Hill in Athens talking to some Athenian philosophers about Jesus.

[7]

Acts 17:27–28a (NLT)

²⁷ “His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸For in him we live and move and exist.

²⁸For in him we live and move and exist.

Jesus' desire for us is that we take on his identity and live and move and exist out of that identity. If we try to live in the old narrative of how we view ourselves we will end up hurting ourselves and others.

²⁸For in him we live and move and exist.

Jesus gives us a new identity. He looks past the unhealthy ways we see ourselves and gives us a new name and then helps us to **live and move and exist in that new identity**. And when we spend time with Jesus allowing him to change our hearts and minds we will become so enthralled with him that we will not be able to help but introduce others to him.

²⁸For in him we live and move and exist.

We need a major paradigm shift. If we are going to live our lives on purpose we need to allow Jesus to do a complete makeover of our lives, and give us a new identity so we are no longer living as though we are the main characters in our story.

²⁸For in him we live and move and exist.

That's how we left off last week. John 1 is all about people meeting Jesus and being so taken with him that they couldn't help but introduce others to him. **Andrew** met Jesus and ran and got his brother **Simon**, to introduce him to Jesus. Then Jesus found **Philip** and called him and he went to look for

Nathaniel and told him that they had found the Messiah. And we pick it up there. Nathaniel has yet to meet Jesus.

[8]

John 1:43–51 (NLT)

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.”*

[9]

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.”*

[10]

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.”*

[11]

Let’s walk through the passage, verse by verse.

John 1:43–51 (NLT)

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

[12]

(1). Jesus still calls the same way today as he did then. “Come, follow me.” He invites us into life with him. He invites us to follow him and make something of our lives. He calls us to live our lives on purpose with him. We do not have to be victims of our circumstances. We can live our lives on purpose. ²⁸***For in him we live and move and exist.***

Likely, since you are here this morning, Jesus has called you. However, just because you happen to be in a Baptist church on a Sunday morning does not necessarily mean you are following his call. Jesus doesn’t just call us to go to church. He calls us to follow him. Some of you are here because it is what you have always done. It has very little to do with following Jesus, except that you, perhaps, believe he saved you at some point in your life.

[13]

An indication that you are following Jesus is that you are becoming like him. You are letting his Word penetrate your heart. Jesus calls us to follow him and allow him to change our hearts so we become like him. The passages in the New Testament that speak to this are myriad. Here are just a few.

[14]

1 John 2:6 (NLT)

⁶ *Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.*

[15]

Luke 6:46 (NLT)

⁴⁶ *“So why do you keep calling me ‘Lord, Lord!’ when you don’t do what I say?”*

[16]

2 Corinthians 3:17–18 (NLT)

17 For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

[17]

1 Peter 2:21 (NLT)

21 For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.

It can't get any clearer than that. It's so easy to say, "I am a Christian." That means you hold to certain theological truths about Jesus. Anyone can say that. **The litmus test is, are you being changed by him?** Are you one of his apprentices?

[18]

Jesus calls us to step out from the crowd and follow him.

Let's carry on. So, Jesus went to Galilee, found Philip and called him to follow.

[19]

John 1:43–51 (NLT)

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."

[20]

So, again, we see (2). those who have encounters with Jesus being so captured by him that they cannot help but introduce others to him.

We don't need to belabour this. We spent considerable time on it last week. Just let me say this. Remember in Acts 1, after Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead, he told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until he would send the Holy Spirit. And then he said this;

[21]

Acts 1:8 (NLT)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

I preached on this passage a couple years ago. Jesus told his apprentices that when the Holy Spirit comes on them **they will be his witnesses**. We usually read this as a command. It wasn't. Jesus was simply stating what would happen if his apprentices allow his Spirit to rule their lives. **You will be my witnesses**. It is what apprentices of Jesus do. They cannot help but point to Jesus. Just like a mirror reflects the light of the sun, so the lives of an apprentice of Jesus reflect the light of the Son - of God.

[22]

2 Corinthians 3:17–18 (NLT)

17 For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

Something supernatural happens to apprentices of Jesus who spend time with him and allow him to change their hearts and minds. They become more and more like Jesus — and others cannot help but notice.

So, back to our passage, Philip meets Jesus. He is so taken by him that he has to tell someone. He can't keep this good news to himself, so he goes and finds Nathaniel and tells him that they have found the Messiah and he's from Nazareth.

[23]

John 1:43–51 (NLT)

46 “Nazareth!” exclaimed Nathanael. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

This is a bit of New Testament humour. Nazareth was a nothing of a town. It was a very small village, where literally, everybody knew everybody. It was a hick town of no consequence.

The week my father died, we moved my mother from the very small Saskatchewan town of Rocanville, to the even smaller town of Wapella, just fifteen minutes away, where my sister lives.

Wapella was likely about the size of Nazareth. It's website boasts a population of 408. I'm not sure if they have updated it since my mother moved there last month. The website also claims that the town has **“Everything you could want in a town. A dam stocked with fish for fishing, a golf course, for summer fun, a toboggan hill for those fun winter days”**

I'm not sure where the hill was hiding because I sure couldn't see it. Now, you might think that this is the sort of town out of which nothing good could come. But, that's not actually the case. Besides my sister and her family and my mother now being from there, they have a couple names they are proud to drop.

[24]

Brett Clark and Dave Dunn are both former NHL hockey players. Brett Clark retired a couple years ago. And Dave Dunn actually played for the Canucks for a couple seasons in the early seventies. They are both from Wapella. So, don't ever suggest that nothing good can come from Wapella, Saskatchewan.

When we lived in Vancouver, our Nazareth was Surrey. Surrey's claim to fame was that it has one of the highest incidences of car thefts in the country. It ranks third out of one hundred cities. We jokingly said their city motto was, “Surrey — we've got your car.” People in Vancouver liked to make fun of Surrey.

That was what Nazareth was like.

[25]

46 “Nazareth!” exclaimed Nathanael. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

Nathaniel's heart seems initially closed and skeptical. Maybe he has a healthy skepticism, since Jesus says he is a man of integrity. Either way, he doesn't expect that Jesus could show up in a place like Nazareth.

Where is your Nazareth? Are there people in your life you think Jesus couldn't possibly reach? Is there a people group, you imagine Jesus couldn't infiltrate? Jesus wants to break down those false ideas. He will show up in places where we would least expect him.

Each Monday I get an email from Steve Jones, our FEBCC president with a word of encouragement. He sends it out to all ministry staff in the 500 churches across Canada. This last Monday's email was very appropriate for this sermon so I'd like to read it to you.

Several months ago, I heard Amy Orr-Erwing, a representative from Ravi Zacharias International Ministry (RZIM) tell a story of the Anglican church plant she and her husband had begun in Peckham, a poor, tough region of London, UK. It is a very violent, gang-filled neighbourhood. But there is a world-class Arts College nearby, very liberal, with no Christian presence on campus.

They began to believe this was their church's responsibility, but had no idea what God was already preparing. A year previously, a small group of muslim students from Pakistan started attending this Art College. They decided they were going to seek their God and really discover if he was real. One young woman's parents were well-to-do and financial supporters of Al-Queda. The muslim students arrived in London, and this young woman began to do her Islamic prayers, fasting and other disciplines. But she did not sense a change.

Then one night she had a dream about Jesus. Today, muslims all over the world are testifying of dreams and visions of Jesus. So she decided to do her Islamic prayers one day, and the next day pray to Jesus and alternate back and forth.

One day she was walking near campus and an American student stopped her to get directions to a convenience store to purchase a Pepsi. While the girl was giving her directions, the American girl stopped her and said, "I know this will sound unusual. I'm a follower of Jesus, and I sense I'm supposed to tell you that Jesus wants you and your friends to seek Him." She was saying this to a muslim girl wearing the hijab. They sat for three hours and she told her American tourist friend her story.

The tourist sent RZIM her contact information and Amy's church youth leader contacted the muslim girl. They met and began to study the Bible, and she received Christ. Soon after, she visited Amy and her husband (the Pastor of the church) for tea and to tell her story. They went to their youth meeting, and she told her story – the young adults were mesmerized and rejoiced. The group then gathered for a church worship service and this young former muslim, now a follower of Jesus, was incredibly excited and animated about her first time to corporately worship her God with other followers of Christ. She had never had this opportunity before. She looked intensely at the youth leader and said, "Do you know what it's like to know you can know your God, to be able to freely approach Him with joy and thanksgiving and not feel like you must prostrate and grovel before Him?" She then paused and said, "Can I dance? Are we allowed to dance in church?"

The Youth Leader said, "Absolutely not! This is an ANGLICAN church!"

No, that's not what she said; the youth leader said, "Yes, dance before the Lord."

Do Baptists dance? This Baptist hasn't in years, but maybe I need to rethink that!?

IMAGINE with ME

Imagine if more of us obeyed those quiet promptings from the Lord and spoke to total strangers, neighbours or family members. How many more amazing stories might we be able to share? What might happen? Possibly dancing in the streets or even in our churches?

Now, don't worry. I'm not going to encourage you to dance down the aisles. But, I am going to ask you if you are limiting God by how you box him in. Is your theology too small for God? Jesus wants to bust your boxes wide open. Do you expect Jesus to do a work through you? Do you keep your eyes open to

what he is doing around you? Or, are you thinking the same thing as Nathaniel. “God, couldn’t work in the hearts of my neighbours or coworkers. God wouldn’t use me.”

[26]

(3). If we open our eyes to what he is doing around us, Jesus will do some amazing things, beyond what we expect or imagine. Don’t limit God.

Let’s continue. So, Nathaniel is skeptical. He says to Philip, ***“Can anything good come from Nazareth.”***

[27]

John 1:43–51 (NLT)

“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!”

[28]

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.”

What’s happening here? The language is a bit confusing. Some Biblical scholars say that the phrase “under the fig tree” is a rabbinical idiom meaning to meditate on the Mosaic Law. So, perhaps, Jesus was saying, “I saw you meditating on Scripture.”

After Jesus says this to Nathaniel, his eyes are opened and he believes that Jesus is the Messiah, the King of Israel. The next thing Jesus says is even more confusing.

[29]

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.”

Likely what he is referring to here is Genesis 28. Let’s take a look at that quickly.

[30]

Genesis 28:10–16 (NLT)

¹⁰ Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. ¹¹ At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone to rest his head against and lay down to sleep. ¹² As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway.

[31]

¹³ At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, “I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants.

[32]

¹⁵ What’s more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised

you.” ¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it!”

So, what was Jesus saying? Firstly, perhaps he saw Nathaniel “under the fig tree” meditating on Genesis 28. And then most importantly he was telling Nathaniel that the Scripture he was reading was referring to himself. He was saying, *he* is the gateway to heaven. Jesus is **“is the way the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through him.”** And the miracle that Jesus did by revealing to Nathaniel that he had seen him reading Genesis 28 under the fig tree was nothing compared to what he was going to witness if Nathaniel followed Jesus.

God wants to do so much more through us than we can ever imagine. Are we limiting God?

“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it!”

The Holy Spirit is at work around us — right now. How many of you believe that? We limit what God wants to do through us by closing our eyes to what he is doing. We get so busy and distracted by so many things. What is keeping you from being involved in the work of Jesus? Is it fear? Are you skeptical that God is actually at work, or that he could use you? Do you doubt that he could reach your “hardened neighbours”? What is holding you back?

Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows what we are afraid of. He knows the things that hold us back from entering into the life he’s called us to. He knows. He is inviting each of us to join him in an exciting journey. Don’t limit him.

He’s saying the same thing to us as he said to Nathaniel. You will see even greater things.

Jesus told Nathaniel that he wanted him to witness some amazing things.

[33]

“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.”

He was telling him that the miracle he showed him by letting him know that he saw him “under the fig tree” was really insignificant compared to people coming to faith in Jesus.

[34]

There is no greater miracle than a life transformed by Jesus. And he wants us to be a part of that in Campbell River. That’s pretty amazing!

[35]

When Jesus calls us to follow him he invites us into an exciting, full, abundant life. Remember in John 10:10, Jesus said that Satan’s goal is to steal and kill and destroy, but, he came to give us full and satisfying life. And there is nothing more satisfying than being used by God to point others to Jesus. When Jesus called us to follow he didn’t say, “Let’s go to church together and stay safe.” He said, **“Church, come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”** That is when life gets exciting.



Encounters with Jesus
Jesus Calls Apprentices II
Week of April 17th, 2016

Objective of this study: To allow God's Word and the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds to what he could do through us if we follow Jesus.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **1 Chronicles 16:8-12** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you.

Welcome

When you get some good news, or something exciting happens, who is the first person you want to share it with?

Word (30 - 45 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read John 1:43-51. Describe Nathaniel before and after his encounters with Jesus; what paradigm shift did he need? What did Jesus want to open his eyes to?

Sermon Quote: "An indication that you are following Jesus is that you are becoming like him. you are letting his Word penetrate your heart. Jesus calls us to follow him and allow him to change our hearts so we become like him."

3. Break up into pairs or small groups. Each group take one of these passages and look for what change is being described and how does it complete the picture of what God wants to do through us? Acts 17:27-28a; 2 Corinthians 3:17-8; Luke 6:46; Acts 1:8.

Work (30- 45 minutes)

[It's really important when doing the Work part of this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Sermon Quote: "The Holy Spirit is at work around us — right now. How many of you believe that? We limit what God wants to do through us by closing our eyes to what he is doing. We get so busy and distracted by so many things. What is keeping you from being involved in the work of Jesus? Is it fear? Are you skeptical that God is actually at work, or that he could use you? Do you doubt that he could reach your "hardened neighbours"? What is holding you back?

Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows what we are afraid of. He knows the things that hold us back from entering into the life he's called us to. He knows. He is inviting each of us to join him in an exciting journey. Don't limit him."

1. What is your response to the email Steve Jones shared?
2. What are some ways *you* tend to limit God?
3. Where or what is your “Nazareth”?
4. Jesus is calling us all to be apprentices. That means change. What change do you sense he is nudging you towards?

Sermon Quote: “When Jesus calls us to follow him he invites us into an exciting, full, abundant life. Remember in John 10:10, Jesus said that Satan’s goal is to steal and kill and destroy, but, he came to give us full and satisfying life. And there is nothing more satisfying than being used by God to point others to Jesus. When Jesus called us to follow he didn’t say, “Let’s go to church together and stay safe.” He said, “*Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.*” That is when life gets exciting.”

5. Spend the rest of the time praying for each other. Ask Jesus to give you the desire and the courage to live and love like he loves and to respond to his promptings.