

17 Jan 2021 Second Sunday of Epiphany Prayers for Christian Unity.

Gospel John 1.43-51

⁴³The 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 come 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, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

Reflection

With all that is going on around us at the moment we can be excused for forgetting to think positively and sharing the good news of Jesus.

Nathanael was not expecting to see anything special about this man Jesus, he had prejudged him and found him wanting. Nathanael knew where Jesus was from, and he decided that no one could amount to anything from there. How often I have been told jokes about places in Cornwall that are not kind nor truthful, let alone the jokes about Devon and their cream problems.

Behind the humour lies a rather more challenging issue, in that in order to feel good we so often resort to making others look bad, in order to be seen as acceptable and cool we have to make others be afraid of our words and attitudes. This is not cool, nor kind, not even helpful to shore up our lack of confidences with outward projection of scorn.

Philip hears about Jesus and wants to share this news with his friend Nathanael, but is slapped down by that damning phrase, can anything good come out of Nazareth? But Philip perseveres, come, and see – and leading Nathanael to an encounter with Jesus that will and does change his life, saves his life.

I wonder how we have been able to talk about our faith to others. Not in the roadside pulpit thumping sort of way but in an honest and open way. When we find out about a fabulous café or a beach (in the days we could go out to explore!) didn't we share the joy and excitement of this with others? I wonder if you have ever thought of sharing your faith in the same sort of way? Or do we act with prejudice believing that our friends would not be interested or want to know?

Simple things like, "we sang one of my favourite hymns today, and it really encouraged me" Or "I heard something in the prayers in church today which got me thinking and challenged me to make a change" Or "praying really helps me when I am feeling stressed and fed up, somehow praying makes me aware of God and His love and peace". Or even "I really enjoyed the sermon today, it made me think and remember how much God loves us all" These while not asking others to share your faith, do give an opportunity for them to then ask you a question, leading to a conversation that is more life giving than where to get the best pasty -although this is also particularly important!!

During the week of prayer for Christian Unity, what about deciding to pray for one another across the different churches, and I have copied some prayers from churches across the world at the end of the intercessions? But even more why not take a chance and commit to talk to a friend who does not share your faith, with at least one small sentence or two about God's work in your life. You never know, like Philip in the gospel, this small sentence may change a whole life!

Intercessions by Linda Laroche

As we begin this week of prayer for Christian Unity open our hearts so that we can welcome each other with our differences and live in forgiveness. Help us all to focus on the words found in John 15:12 "Love one another as I have loved you."

God our Father, you reveal to us your love through Christ and through our brothers and sisters. Open our hearts so that we can welcome each other with our differences and live in forgiveness. Grant us to live united in one body, so that the gift that is in each person comes to light. We pray for the congregation and church to which we belong at this challenging time that we may, all of us together, be a reflection of the living Christ.

Lord in your mercy; hear our prayer

Almighty God, as you have made us members of Christ, may we show understanding and extend friendship to those who are crying out for Christ's love. As we join our prayers with others across the diocese let us remember our Bishop and clergy and lay staff as we now enter into this new phase of lockdown and the work involved in enabling us to continue with our worship. Help us all to accept that there are new and different ways of being a church family and of reaching out into our community. Help us to pray in the knowledge that things will continue to be different and that we may find strength and hope for a better future in the assurance of your love

Lord in your mercy; hear our prayer

God of peace and God of reconciliation, we ask for your peace and reconciliation to start with us today so that we may reach out to others with love and compassion. Help the leaders of the nations to seek peace and reconciliation with each other, particularly at this time with the political issues in America, and to bring tolerance and unity into the world.

Lord in your mercy; hear our prayer

We pray for all those in any kind of need at this time, *(particularly those most affected by Covid19, for our hard pressed NHS, for the care workers, school staff and teachers, shop workers, delivery drivers, Royal Mail posties, refuse collectors, GP surgeries, vets, and dentists, and all whose essential daily work puts them into risk for our safety.)*

We pray too for those who are separated from much loved family and friends, for those who are struggling with mental health issues, with anxiety and concerns: whether financial, educational or health.

Help us to hold all of these people in our hearts and in a moment of silence let us offer up to God anyone in our hearts who need our prayers at this time.

Lord in your mercy; hear our prayer

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

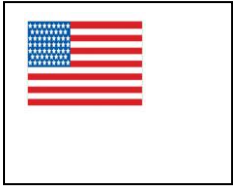
Methodist Church – Great Britain

New every morning is your love, Great God of light, and all day long you are working for good in the world. Stir up in us desire to



serve you, to live peacefully with our neighbours, and to devote each day to your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen

Episcopal Church – North America



Let the light of thy Gospel shine upon all nations; and may as many as have received it, live as becomes it. Be gracious unto thy Church; and grant that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may serve thee faithfully.



Uniting Church in Australia

You fill us with the Holy Spirit and call us to share in Christ's ministry
living and praying for the world day and night until love and loyalty embrace, peace and justice kiss and all are free as Christ is free.



Church of North India

Begin doing what you want to do now. We are not living in eternity. We have only this moment, sparkling like a star in our hand and melting like a snowflake.



Underground Church of China

Our Lady of Sheshan, sustain all those in China, who, amid their daily trials, continue to believe, to hope, to love. May they never be afraid to speak of Jesus to the world, and of the world to Jesus.

Church Mission Service Africa

May the truth of the Man drench you
May the power of the Lion protect you
May the endurance of the Ox sustain you
May the wings of the Eagle lift you
And may the Lamb that was slain give you life every day,
Wherever you may be. Amen.

