

Jesus: Active in John's Gospel: Calling

John 1:35-49

I'm hugely excited to embark on a new season of Study together in which we look at the purposeful activity of Jesus in John's Gospel.

During Lent, we will each have a study booklet - low key not highbrow - which I'm writing just for you so that we can examine more closely the activity of Jesus in John's Gospel in the approach to the cross. These will be sent out during February and can include some of your Lent and Easter memories, traditions and recipes.

Whereas Matthew, Mark and Luke have a lot of similarities - and maybe even Matthew and Luke expanding on Mark's Gospel which is likely the earliest - John is different. John writes his Gospel, not against the human historical background but the eternal. Matthew may take us back to Abraham in his Genealogy and Luke to Adam, but John takes us us to the co-eternity of Jesus - with God in the very beginning.

We can listen to Chris Shaw's Christmas Eve Sermon on the EMC channel for Midnight Communion for an in depth treatment of this.

In John's Gospel, there is a deliberate expectation that we start to see in Jesus, God being brought near. The same Word that was active in creation is active due to the incarnation - having made his dwelling among us, Jesus sets about bringing the purposes of God close to people.

I am reminded of the words from Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul & spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

The word of God's activity is that it is transformational, that it creates, that it makes things new as its life gets to work upon them. In John's Gospel, the Word is active - busy and transformative in purpose as Jesus lives and works among people. This series will look at this activity as a Christology - a study of Jesus as we see the unity of Jesus with the Father in fulfilling the Father's purposes. John is clear that the activity of Jesus precedes his Gospel and Jesus' appearing on earth and in Chapters 20 & 21, we see that John is clear that the activity of Jesus is not done - that it continues after his earthly ministry.

In 20: 31-32, John writes that; *Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

Again, we see the emphasis on the activity of Jesus to draw people to the knowledge of the saving love of God through revealing God's saving power as he lives among us. 'Performing signs' is a big part of John's Gospel which is known for its miracles which point the discerning person to recognise that Jesus is the Messiah and that God is active on his earth. Through receiving the truth of Jesus', believers would receive the life of God that we also read about in John 1:4. *In him was life and that life was the light of all people.*

In today's passage, we see how Jesus calls people towards him. John the Baptist bows out of the narrative having introduced Jesus as The Lamb of God - drawing our focus to Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah. Jesus' invitation to John's disciples is that they 'come and see' where he, the Rabbi as they describe him, is staying in verse 38. 'Come and see' is an invitation to browse,

to consider the whereabouts and purposes of Jesus without being asked to make a commitment...

When we start looking for Jesus, for God as we are prompted by things around us and personal circumstances, it is often to 'come and see' - to pop into a service or check out the YouTube link or to join an online Alpha Course — If anyone would like an online Alpha Course, please do get in touch, it's on our list! Come and see... Come and see Jesus at home, teaching his followers, praying to his Father, fulfilling his calling. Come and see Jesus in the place where he dwells - which is among us - when we open our eyes to believe in him, we find that he has made his home- the place where he is staying, Right Here.

In this early passage as Jesus calls followers to him, there are things about Jesus that we begin to notice:

How many titles John fits into this short passage... Lamb of God (36) Rabbi (38) which I just mentioned... Messiah (41), The One who was foretold by Moses and the Prophets (45), Son of God, King of Israel (49) and pushing into (51) is Son of Man... Jesus then is more than a man and more than a teacher and more than a prophet and more than a preacher or teacher. Putting all these together, we see the divinity of Jesus, rooted on earth but so intrinsically connected with The Father that the two cannot be separated...

This is borne out by what we see Jesus doing. His calling goes beyond, 'Hey, mate! Come and spend a bit of time with me'... in this passage, he names Peter, Cephas in (42).

In (43) we find the imperative and simplicity of calling - *The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "follow me."* It is Philip who makes the connection to Nathanael - and we should not underestimate the power of the invitation - even if the one we make is met with such a grumpy response as Philip receives from Nathanael. How many times, do we hear people respond out of their own situation and context in a way that perfectly fits the context but is like the top layer response which hides the reality of their searching for Jesus, for God.

I was taught that the obedience that we should display in making invitations is simply that. To make it. That is your success - the success of your obedience and not the rate of return that you see on a first time invitation to things of faith. Philip follows God's prompt and Jesus is able to see what Nathanael truly needs and to meet him at the point of that need. Do as you are told and leave the rest with God.

Jesus' call to the people embedded in the Israelite traditions comes in the person of Nathanael - most likely a scholar as denoted by him being under a tree - we see Nathanael move from disbelief to belief in the presence of Jesus' words.

The whole scene of Jesus and Nathanael is a mix of Nathanael's prejudice against Jesus Son of Joseph of Nazareth to Jesus having 'seen' Nathanael under the tree and Nathanael's subsequent revelation which leads him to make the incredible statement in (49) that "*Rabbi! You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!*"

Being in Jesus' presence transforms Nathanael's thinking and flushes away his prejudices about the man. He sees Jesus for who he is. In his call, Jesus brings the divine activity of drawing people to God. Of clearing away the rubbish that has clogged our filters and stopped us from watching out for the truth and life that Jesus brings. Nathanael is prepared to swap out his Old Religion to welcome the Christ into his life.

Jesus calls his disciples. There are many types of invitation to come and look, to come and follow to 'I see you, I know you'. Jesus is the Son of God and in declaring him the true king of Israel, it goes back to before Saul and David and the line of Kings - to the time when the people of God knew only God as their Sovereign.

Is Jesus calling you today. Is he telling you that he sees you and calling out for you to recognise him for who he is - Christ the King?

Is Jesus calling you to come and have a look? To call up one of your church friends and have a chat about some of the things about Jesus which have confused you or puzzled you over time, limiting your ability to truly see and know him?

Maybe like Peter, Jesus is calling you to wear a new name - begin a work on his behalf as he calls you to it.

Or like Philip, for him to find you and let him call you home to his heart right now.

Jesus is active in John's Gospel; active with the power and authority of the Father. He brings God's purposes close to us on earth through his living presence. He offers us a new way. A way of hope and life.

Will you choose to follow him today as he calls out to you?