



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Called to Proclaim God's Love in Christ for Every Person

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Cantor	Kyle Haugen
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✧ *In Worship Today* ✧

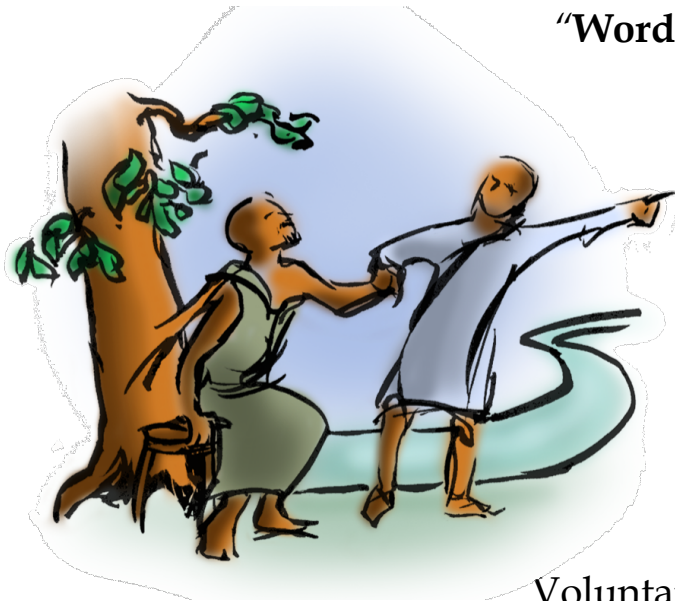
Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Gospel and Prayers	Svend Phillips (<i>responses</i> , Magdalena Phillips)

This service of worship can also be heard online. Go to queenannelutheran.org and click on "WORD OUT" to find audio, video, and print resources for worship at home, as well as resources to use with children.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

January 17, 2021

“Word Out” audio transcript



Prelude

Voluntary on the *cornet* stops
Starling Goodwin (1711–1774)

Welcome

P: Welcome, this Second Sunday after Epiphany, to Queen Anne Lutheran Church. Wherever you are listening, whatever challenges you might be facing, we invite you into this space: one where you can hear the Good News through proclamation, spoken and sung; a time where you can be still, and know God is God.

The story of the calling of Nathanael in our Gospel reading for today plays with the idea of place. Nathanael initially dismisses Jesus because he comes from Nazareth. But where we come from isn't important; it's where – or rather whom – we come *to*. Jesus refers to Jacob, who had a vision in a place he called “the house of God, and . . . the gate of heaven” (Gen. 28:17). Jesus says he himself is the place where Nathanael will meet God. But who was this mysterious Nathanael, and what became of him after this initial encounter he had with Jesus?


Apostolic Greeting


P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

G: **And also with you.**

Gospel Acclamation

John 1:41, 17


G: 
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

A: 
Repeat alleluia

We have found the Messiah:

Jesus Christ, who brings us grace and truth.

G: 
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.


Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The Holy Gospel:

John 1:43-51

A: The Holy Gospel according to John, the first chapter.

G: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

A: ⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip 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." ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸Nathanael asked him, "Where did

you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." ⁴⁹Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹And 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."

A: The Gospel of the Lord.

G: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

The Original 12th Man

Pastor Dan Peterson

It was the hardest question I've ever been asked in a job interview. I was a candidate for the position I now hold as pastor of Queen Anne Lutheran Church. I had met with the Call Committee multiple times. I enjoyed our conversations. I felt at ease. Expressing their desire to move forward, I learned that my last interview would be with a *slightly* larger group – the congregation itself.

I remember the day of the interview well. It was downstairs in our Fellowship Hall. The chairs were arranged in a semi-circle. About 50 people were present and they asked all kinds of questions. One person wanted to know about my plans for our children's ministry and Sunday School programming. Another person asked about our senior members and how I would minister to them. I felt ready for each question, yet nothing – absolutely nothing – could prepare me for one I got at the end of the interview. "What are your thoughts," somebody asked, "about the 12th Man?"

Now, in case any of you hearing this do not live in Seattle, the 12th Man refers to the position fans of the Seattle Seahawks figuratively occupy on the team. All football teams compete with eleven players on the field. Being the "12th Man" means that you belong to the team as a supporter even though you are not literally on the field, that you participate in something bigger than yourself while in the stands or while watching the game from home. Fortunately, while I wasn't expecting the question, I was still able to respond.

I had two advantages. First, I was already living in Seattle, which meant I was quite familiar with the 12th Man. Second, I was teaching religion courses at Seattle University which helped me become even more familiar with the Bible than I was as a graduate student, especially with the New Testament. The combination enabled me to respond with lightning speed.

“The 12th Man?” I remember asking in response. “You mean Matthias, the disciple who replaced Judas?” (Judas, as you know, was the one among the twelve who betrayed Jesus. When Matthias replaced him according to Acts 1:26, he effectively became *The 12th Man*.)

In hearing my response, the good news was that the congregation laughed, thank God, I received the call, and to this day only a few members know that I’m actually a 49ers fan. It is (or was) my deep, dark secret.

The Disciple Nathaniel

Long before my interview at Queen Anne Lutheran, we meet a man in today’s reading who was interviewed by Jesus. His name is Nathaniel which in Hebrew means “Gift of God.” Nathaniel appears only twice in the whole New Testament, here at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry according to John 1:43-51, and once more at the end of Jesus’ ministry according to John 21:2. The second of these references tells us something about Nathaniel we do not learn in the first: he comes from Cana in the region of Galilee.

Now Cana, as you know, is the city in which Jesus performs the first of seven signs according to John by turning water into wine. Nathaniel’s place of origin might help explain his attitude toward Nazareth way back in chapter one. When Philip says, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth,” Nathaniel replies, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

Why did Nathaniel look down on Nazareth? Was it because of its small population? Nazareth, after all, was a tiny, insignificant village about 16 miles west of the Sea of Galilee. How could the messiah come from there? Was Nathaniel, by contrast, from a bustling metropolis, a place to which people from all over the Roman Empire would come to engage in commerce and trade? Not

according to archeological evidence. Excavations suggest that Cana, Nathaniel's hometown, was hardly much bigger than Nazareth.

Most likely then, Nathaniel questioned Nazareth as the place from which the messiah would come due to biblical prophecy. The Old Testament, as Craig Koester points out, "said nothing about the messiah coming from Nazareth or even Galilee" ("Messianic Exegesis and the Call of Nathaniel," 26). Philip's claim would have sounded absurd, hence Nathaniel's question: "Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

We can explain Nathaniel's attitude toward Nazareth pretty easily. A much harder puzzle to solve concerns the identity of Nathaniel himself. Who was he? None of the other Gospels mention him. They mention Philip, yet in every list of the twelve they list Bartholomew's name next. John, by contrast, never mentions Bartholomew. Nathaniel comes after Philip. This has led some to speculate that Nathaniel and Bartholomew refer to the same person. Unfortunately, no evidence exists to support this claim. It's pure conjecture.

What we know about Nathaniel, therefore, comes almost entirely from his interaction with Jesus in today's Gospel. When Jesus sees Nathaniel approaching, he exclaims, "Here is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit" (John 1:47). How, Nathaniel replies, does Jesus know him? The two had never met. Jesus answers, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathaniel then replies, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (1:49). His reaction seems a bit unmerited, doesn't it? Why would Nathaniel proclaim Jesus as the messiah just because the latter saw him under a fig tree?

New Testament scholar Mark Allan Powell offer a compelling explanation. It all comes down to the word "see," which Jesus uses figuratively. Not only could he perceive Nathaniel's character before he met him; he also knew "where Nathaniel was when [the would-be disciple] was apparently alone" (690). Jesus, in other words, engaged in a kind of *remote viewing*! This "apparently miraculous insight" on the part of Jesus compelled Nathaniel to confess Jesus as Israel's king and messiah, just as the appearance of the risen Christ compelled Thomas to confess "My Lord and my God" toward the end of John's Gospel.

More Mysteries

Perhaps the biggest mystery pertaining to Nathaniel's identity occurs in the final verse of today's reading when Jesus tells Nathaniel that he "will see heaven opened and the angel of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John 1:51). Here Jesus depicts himself as the mediator between God and human beings, a messenger who reveals God to the world. The imagery of a ladder from earth to heaven comes from a dream we hear about in the Old Testament. Do you know whose dream it is?

The answer is Jacob. According to Genesis 28:12, Jacob "dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it."

Jesus' allusion to Jacob and his ladder unlocks the meaning of his otherwise strange dialogue with Nathaniel. Jacob, you may recall, tricked his nearly blind father Isaac into offering him a blessing that was intended for his twin brother Esau. When Esau finds out what Jacob did and asks Isaac for an explanation, Isaac says, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing" (Gen 27:35). To be an Israelite "in whom there is no deceit," as Jesus says to Nathaniel in John 1:47, is to be the opposite of Jacob at this point in Jacob's story. Only a person "pure in heart," Jesus seems to be saying, can recognize who Jesus is.

Jesus puts it another way in the Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are the pure of heart," he tells his listeners, "for they will see God" (Matt 5:8).

How, then, do we obtain a pure heart in order to "see" God? Not, to be sure, by anything we do! It's a gift, as the name Nathaniel suggests – a gift from God.

The story of Jacob wrestling with God symbolizes his change of heart, upon which he receives the name of Israel (Gen 32:28). When Jesus, therefore, says "Here is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit," he associates Nathaniel with Israel, the name given to Jacob after his conversion. The purity of heart they mutually possess enables them to see and grasp spiritual truth. It enables Nathaniel to recognize the truth about Jesus in his role as mediator between God and humanity.

Nathaniel's identification with Israel explains, finally, the greatest mystery of today's reading. When Jesus says in the last verse that he will "see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man," he switches in the original Greek from addressing Nathaniel as "you" (v. 48) to the plural form of "y'all." Translated accordingly, v. 51 has Jesus say to Nathaniel, "Very truly, I tell you all, you all will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Our disciple, it turns out, "may be a collective character representing those in Israel who have *no deceit*, i.e., none of the qualities of Jacob before he became Israel. Because of their openness to Jesus, they will see him in the fullness of his role as mediator between heaven and earth" (*New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 149).

The True 12th Man

The suggestion that Nathaniel is a "collective character" helps explain why he never appears in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. In John, he serves the same purpose as the Beloved Disciple who also never appears in Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

The Beloved Disciple plays a significant role in John's Gospel. He appears next to Jesus at the Last Supper, at the foot of the cross during his crucifixion, and as the first to reach and enter the empty tomb after the resurrection. Given his importance, you would think the other Gospels would at least mention him. They don't.

The primacy of the Beloved Disciple and the close relationship he has with Jesus in John's Gospel has led some scholars, as Raymond Brown observes, to identify the Beloved Disciple "as a pure symbol, created to model the perfect disciple. That he is never given a name, and that he appears alongside Peter in scenes known to us [in Matthew, Mark, and Luke] where no such figure is, have been invoked as proof of nonhistoricity" (*An Introduction to the New Testament*, 369). In other words, the Beloved Disciple did not exist. He was added as an example to inspire hearers of the story to go and do likewise. He was an ideal, a model of perfect discipleship.

What if, by the same logic, Nathaniel was added to the story as well? If Nathaniel represents those of Israel who, like their forebear, have pure and open hearts, the

kind that enable them to become followers of the Way by loving their neighbor as themselves, resisting violence, and rejecting what Colossians 2:8 calls “empty deception” or today’s “conspiracy theory” in the name of truth, then perhaps he too was created to model the perfect disciple. This makes Nathaniel the true 12th Man: even though he was not on the field with the other eleven disciples (excluding Judas), he is in each of us when we participate, as it were, from home or in the stands, calling us to be pure of heart, to empty ourselves of deceit, and to see Jesus by loving others and living for them as he did.

What are my thoughts about the 12th Man? Well, long before the Seahawks existed, and even before Matthias, he was the model disciple each of us is called to be, whose purity of heart enabled him to see God.

Amen.

Hymn of the Day

(see next page)

Will You Come and Follow Me

ELW 798

Prayers of the Church

A: Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

A brief silence.

A: For the body of Christ gathered throughout the world and for all servants of the gospel, that following Jesus, the church lives out its calling every day, let us pray. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: For the well-being of creation, for plants and animals, and for all that God has marvelously made, that we serve as wise stewards of Earth, our home, let us pray. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: For police officers and firefighters, for attorneys and paralegals, for peacekeepers and military personnel, and for the leaders of governments, that they provide protection to all people, especially the most vulnerable, let us pray. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

Hymn of the Day

Will You Come and Follow Me

stanzas 1, 2 & 4

ELW 798



1 "Will you come and fol - low me if I but call
2 "Will you leave your - self be - hind if I but call
3 "Will you let the blind - ed see if I but call
4 "Will you love the you you hide if I but call
5 Lord, your sum - mons ech - oes true when you but call



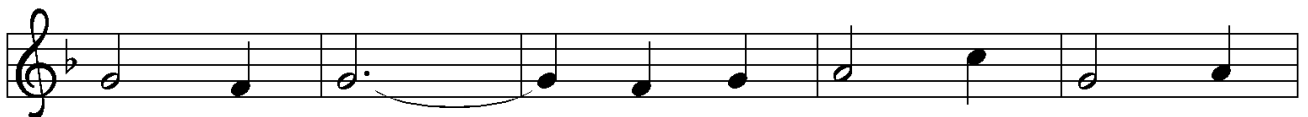
your name? Will you go where you don't
your name? Will you care for cruel and
your name? Will you set the pris - 'ners
your name? Will you quell the fear in -
my name. Let me turn and fol - low



know and nev - er be the same?
kind and nev - er be the same?
free and nev - er be the same?
side and nev - er be the same?
you and nev - er be the same.



Will you let my love be shown, will you let my
Will you risk the hos - tile stare, should your life at -
Will you kiss the lep - er clean, and do such as
Will you use the faith you've found to re - shape the
In your com - pa - ny I'll go where your love and



name be known, will you let my life be
tract or scare? Will you let me an - swer
this un - seen, and ad - mit to what I
world a - round, through my sight and touch and
foot - steps show. Thus I'll move and live and



grown in you and you in me?"
pray'r in you and you in me?"
mean in you and you in me?"
sound in you and you in me?"
grow in you and you in me.

A: For those lacking food or shelter, for those who are sick or grieving, and for those who are imprisoned or homebound, that God console all who suffer, let us pray. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: For our neighborhood, for those who seek to become part of our faith community for the first time, for those returning, and for those absent, that all who seek to know God are nourished by word and worship, let us pray. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: For whom or what else do the people of God pray?

A silence is given so that your prayers may be offered.

A: Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: In thanksgiving for the saints who have gone before us, that their lives give us a vision of the Gospel in action, let us pray. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

G: **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

G: **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

Announcements

P: We thank you for joining us for this service. If you would like to hear other services or access the newest edition of *the Quill*, our newsletter, we invite you to go to our website at queenannelutheran.org.

P: Receive now the blessing:

Benediction

A: Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

P: Almighty God, the Father, † the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve you.

G: Amen.

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

G: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Fugue in G Major
Christian Friedrich Schane (1713–1800)

About today's music

Today's Hymn of the Day, "Will You Come and Follow Me" (ELW 798), is also known as "The Summons." According to the *Hymnal Companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, the text was written by John Bell, a Scottish Presbyterian pastor, who is also an experienced leader of congregational song. Bell and a colleague often wrote hymns for farewell ceremonies held for youth volunteers who worked among improvised communities. At the conclusion of their year or two of service, these ceremonies were "always held in the house where they had been working," which suggests that this hymn was first sung at an intimate gathering. Although originally intended, as Bell describes it, for "one-off use," the hymn was later published. Bell says, "If I had kept a record of people who have spoken of how a particular line in this [hymn] affected their life, I could have published a book of very moving testimonies..." The text is paired with KELVINGROVE, a traditional Scottish tune.

– Cantor Kyle