

**The Missing Piece to the Puzzle of Life Which We Seek
Is Found in This Simple Invitation: Come and See**

"Isn't it amazing how sometimes we can be looking at something directly in front of us, and yet not see it?" the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander asked in his sermon Sunday. "Isn't it amazing how so many times what we see is determined by what we are looking for, and what we are looking for is colored by what we think we already know?"

"Blind spots, prejudices, perceptual filters: Nathanael was not the only one to suffer from these maladies," Pastor Thelander continued, referring to Nathaniel's mocking reply to Philip, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" All that Nathanael could credit at that point was that Philip had found a carpenter from Nazareth, but not "the Son of God, the Light of the world". "That's all his prejudice would allow him to see when it came to Jesus," Pastor Thelander said, "but fortunately for Nathanael, his destiny did not hinge on his ability to see, but on the fact that he had been seen," by Jesus, under the fig tree, as Jesus told Nathanael.

For whatever reason, not fully recounted in the text, "a dramatic shift occurs in the narrative at this point. . . . Up to this point, Nathanael has been the one who has seen only what he wanted to see with respect to Jesus. He's got his blinders on; he's looking at Jesus through his prejudiced lenses. Jesus is from Nazareth, and we all know what that means!"

"But suddenly, here in verse 49, Nathanael is throwing out divine titles for Jesus: 'Teacher, you are the Son of God, the King of Israel.' Wow! Hos is it that this man has moved from rejection to praise? How did doxology suddenly replace cynicism? . . .

"The answer comes in Philip's response to Nathanael's earlier question. When Nathanael asks, 'Can anything good come from Nazareth?' Philip does not argue with him. Philip does not engage him in debate. Philip simply says to him, 'Come and see.'

"Come and see. Nathanael was drawn to Christ and won to Christ not by an argument, but by an invitation. His prejudice, his spiritual blindness, was not overcome with theological persuasion or apologetic debate, but with an invitation to a relationship. Nathanael comes to see clearly only because he has first been seen. He comes to know fully by learning that he is known fully.

"I am convinced from this story that whether it's our neighbor across the fence, (p. 2→)



"The Light of the World," painted 1853-54 by William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), illustrating Rev. 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Fifty years after he painted it, Hunt said he painted by what he understood as Divine command. He said the door, which has no handle on the outside, represents "the obstinately shut mind." The original hangs in a side room of the chapel at Keble College, Oxford. Toward the end of his life, Hunt painted a life-size version, which was hung in St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

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On the Web: www.epworthchapelonthegreen.org

Sundays, 10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service

Sundays, 11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation

Sundays, 11:45 a.m.: Moderated post-service discussion

Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.: Evening Prayers

Sunday, Feb. 1, 6:00 p.m.: Healing Service

For the poor (updated list): Ground beef; chicken; bacon; fresh produce (particular need now); canned fruits and vegetables; milk; cutter; cheese; cooking oil; pancake mix and syrup; dry cereal; chili powder; garlic powder; diapers and baby wipes; toilet paper; soap; shampoo and conditioner; razors; shaving cream; men's, women's and children's underwear; cleaning supplies and bleach.

Readings. 1/25: Jer. 3:21-4:2; Ps. 130; 1 Cor. 7:17-23; Mark 1:14-20. 2/1,

10 a.m.: Deut. 18:15-20; Ps. 111; 1 Cor. 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28. 2/1, **Healing**

Service: 1 Chron. 7:11-16; Ps. 103:1-13; James 5:13-16; Mt. 8:1-4.

Prayer Emphases: Uzbekistan; Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church; First Congregational Church, Bennington, VT, and the Rev. Robin Greene, interim pastor; Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto; parishioners on Fisk Lane.

(Sermon, cont'd.) or a wayward son or daughter, or a co-worker in crisis, or even ourselves, that the missing piece to the puzzle of life which we seek is found in this simple invitation: come and see. The truth, the meaning of life which we seek, will not be found in tightly woven truth claims between the covers of any book, but in a relationship with a carpenter from Nazareth. At the heart of the Gospel is this simple, yet profound, invitation: come." In "The Light of the World" painting, what if Jesus is "inviting us to come out" into relationship, out of our blind spots and into who we can become with him?