

# Come and see, Jesus is the true king

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good afternoon. We're just going to get started, so if you'd like to take a seat. It's really very good to see you all here for our Wednesday lunchtime talk. I hope that you've all had a chance to grab some lunch. It looks like there's plenty of food left over, so if you've not had a chance before this talk, please grab some lunch after the talk. For the last couple of months, we've been slowly working our way through the start of the Gospel of John. You might be pleased to know this week that nothing's changing. We're carrying on in the Gospel of John, and so we're going to read together John chapter 1, verses 35 to 51. If you're using one of our visitors' Bibles, then you can find that on page 886. That's page 886. Let me read that passage for us.

The next day, again, John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, Behold, the Lamb of God. The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, What are you seeking? And they said to him, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying? He said to them, Come, and you will see.

So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and follow Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, We have found the Messiah, which means Christ.

He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, So you are Simon, the son of John. You should be called Cephas, which means Peter. The next day, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, Follow me. Now, Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Nathanael said to him, Can anything good come out of Nazareth? And Philip said to him, Come and see? Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit. Nathanael said to him, How do you know me? And Jesus answered him, Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, you are the son of God. You are the king of Israel.

[ 3 : 1 6 ] Jesus answered him, Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these. And he said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man.

I'm not sure how much time any of you spend on the on the internet. But when you're on the internet, you one of the things you occasionally come across are some really very cringeworthy public proposal videos. Perhaps you've seen some videos like this. In this genre of internet video, a well-meaning, perhaps brave, but often slightly misguided gentleman chooses a very public place to propose to his girlfriend. It usually involves some dreadful music, and probably a highly choreographed, but really badly executed dance routine. And all of this tends to happen of all the romantic places in the world, somewhere like a shopping center. But in these videos, as the proceedings get going, you find that a crowd starts to form. Initially, it's just a few passers-by, and they can tell that something significant is about to happen. Perhaps it's the oddly placed cheap piano, or the nervous looking man trying to stall his bride-to-be. But they can tell that something is about to happen.

Something important. And so bit by bit, the crowd builds. As the invitation seems to be extended, come and see. Come and see this important thing, this significant event that is about to happen. Now, we get a similar invitation in this passage today, not to see a public proposal, but to see something much more important. To see something incredibly significant that's about to happen.

Because in this passage, the people of God are about to recognize their true king, the one that they've waited for. Perhaps you noticed that as we read through the passage just a couple of minutes ago, those words are repeated several times. Come and you will see. Come and see. [ 5 : 38 ] We're going to follow this story in three parts this afternoon. Firstly, we will follow this crowd as it gathers to come and see. Secondly, we'll see what all of the excitement is about as Jesus Christ is recognized and declared as the king. And thirdly, we'll realize that there is much, much more to see as we carry on watching this Jesus. So firstly, come and see.

Just to comfort you, this first part is by Father Longest. So don't panic when we get to point two. This is not an equal split. If you were here last week and the week before, then you'll recognize John the Baptist in verse 35. All along, his whole purpose has been to point to Jesus, to prepare the way for him. And so it is really no surprise at all to see him doing exactly the same thing here as he's always done. As Jesus walks past him, he declares once again, behold, the Lamb of God. And what he's saying is what he's been saying all along. Go to that one. Follow him. And so lo and behold, two of John's disciples actually listen to his words and they start to follow Jesus. Now at this point, they are quite literally just following him, as in they are walking perhaps awkwardly behind him. But in this perhaps ignoble start, we see the beginning of something that really suffuses this passage. John is the last of the Old Testament prophets. The whole gospel so far has been saying that. He represents that long tradition of people who speak the true words of God. And here in these two disciples, we see two people who listen to the testimony of the prophets and respond in exactly the right way. And so the gospel writer is saying those who listen to the prophets, who claim to have the prophets as their authority, do what these disciples do. They start to follow Jesus. Now we've already been warned in John's gospel that not that's not going to be what everyone who claims the prophets as an authority does. But these people, the ones who have really listened to the prophets, respond in the right way. And I think we're meant to notice that as we read through this story. Now they've not made any big commitments to Jesus yet. This is perhaps faith in utero.

[ 8 : 22 ] And at this point, they are literally walking behind him, following him to see what happens next. And perhaps you or someone you know can sympathize with that. Jesus is perhaps intriguing. He might be what you're looking for. Well, if that's the case, then Jesus says the same thing to you as he does to these two disciples. Look with me at verses 38 and 39. Jesus notices them following him.

And he asks them, what are you seeking? And they reply, where are you staying? He offers the invitation that's the invitation that runs throughout this story. Come and you will see. He invites these two disciples to come and stay with him to find out more. And if you're wondering about Jesus or if someone you know is wondering about Jesus, then this is the invitation to them or to you. Come and you will see. Come and look at the evidence that Jesus gives. Perhaps as we go through this passage bit by bit, you can feel the slow increase in excitement. It's clear that this is building up to something. These two disciples spend a day with Jesus. And on the next day, they are confident in saying what John the Baptist has said. They're satisfied. Look at what Andrew, one of these disciples said to his brother, Simon. In verse 41, he says this, we have found the Messiah, which means the Christ.

[ 9 : 56 ] They have found the Messiah. It's clear now something significant is going to happen. And it's going to involve this man that they've started following. Andrew starts to draw in a crowd. The writer of this gospel wants us to go along with that growing crowd to see what they see. It's just a small audience at this point.

Andrew invites his brother, Simon, to also come and see what they found, the Messiah, the one who might just fulfill everything that they've been waiting for. Simon himself comes to Jesus and Jesus calls him Cephas, which means Peter. This is a word from the local language and it means a rock. Now, it's quite hard to know what this little detail means here. Why is it significant here in John one? We don't want to get diverted by looking too long at the disciples. After all, this is about Jesus. But it's important to notice these details. And I found what one writer has written about this here quite helpful. He says this, this amounts to nothing more than that Peter will be a very different person from what he now is. It's an understated way of saying it, but there's truth in that. Simon has now been drawn into this crowd to come and look at Jesus. He's come to see the significant things that are about to happen.

And to his enormous privilege, he is told by the Messiah that coming to him means he will be made much more than he is now. Perhaps you remember a couple of months ago in the introduction to this gospel, we were told there that many in the dark would not recognize that this Jesus, but that those who do, Jesus would give the right to become children of God, to become much more than they were.

[ 11 : 53 ] And I think, I think that this is that. Coming to Jesus, inviting those you know to come to Jesus means so much more than staying as you are. Becoming a child of God is going to change Simon. He's going to become Peter, the rock. Coming to Jesus, becoming a child of God will leave no one as they are.

That was a small point in the flow of this passage, but it's a big point in the flow of John's gospel, and it's worth noting. So back to the main event, the growing crowd goes to Galilee in verse 43. Philip is added to the group. He is convinced by Jesus, and in turn, he goes to Nathanael. And he tells Nathanael something crucial. Look with me at verse 45. He says this, we have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Now this is vitally important. It is not enough that Jesus is a good teacher, or even that he is a king. Everything hangs on whether this is true, hangs on what and whether what Philip says is true, whether or not Jesus is the king that God has promised. He can't be a king.

He must be the king, the one that his people have been waiting for. God promised through Moses that another prophet would come who would speak the words of God, and the whole law and the prophets, the whole Old Testament, all of Judaism up until this point, has pointed towards someone who would come and do everything right, who would be the perfect sacrifice for sin, who would be the perfect king, who would reign forever, and who would bring in God's blessing to all of God's people, who would usher in a new age of peace and joy. And Philip tells Nathanael that this is the one, that they found him, that Jesus of Nazareth is him. And he offers that same invitation, come and see.

It's hard to know what quite to make of Nathanael's cutting remark about Nazareth. Can anything good come from Nazareth? Perhaps it reflects the fact that Nazareth was not a very pure Jewish place. It would seem unlikely to someone steeped in that culture, that the fulfillment of all Judaism would come from such a place. But despite his remark, Jesus declares that Nathanael is an Israelite indeed, one who gets it, who gets Judaism, and in whom there is no deceit. Now, if nothing else, I think this gives those of us afflicted with sarcasm a little hope. But the fact that Nathanael is identified as a true Israelite is vitally important. All along, the writer has been dropping in things about Jesus being the fulfillment of the prophets, being the promised one, being what Judaism was leading to. The writer has been trying to show us that Jesus is the fulfillment of everything that's gone before, of all history.

[ 15 : 16 ] We've already seen that the right response for those who listen to the prophets is to follow this one. This crowd has built, and now something significant is happening. Now we're going to see what happens as this true Israelite, in whom there is no deceit, who has really listened to all of the testimony of the past. It's faced with Jesus. And so secondly, see, Jesus really is the Son of God. In Nathanael, true Israel has come to Jesus. Now Nathanael had his doubts, especially when he heard that Jesus came from Nazareth. But Jesus very quickly puts those fears to rest. He gives Nathanael a sign.

Jesus knew him before he met him. He saw him under the fig tree and knew him. That's a very simple sign, but it appears it's enough. And we've reached the high point of the story. We were invited all along to come and see, and what happens next is what we've come to see. Nathanael says this in verse 49.

He says, Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel. You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel. Now the Son of God here is not quite the same as Nathanael declaring that Jesus is the eternal Son in a Trinity sense. John's Gospel has already said that loud and clear and says it many times again. But Nathanael is not quite saying that. What that means is something very similar to the title, the Christ. And what he's saying is that Jesus is the one who truly rules God's kingdom as God's King. He's saying, here is the one who fulfills everything that Israel was meant to be. And here is the one who will fulfill everything that God's people spread throughout the tapestry of time have been waiting for. This is who this Jesus is. And true Israel recognizes him as that. Now there's a polemic edge to what John the evangelist writes here. We're going to go through the gospel and we're going to see lots of people who claim to be true Jews, but reject Jesus.

John wants us to see right from the start that Jesus is really the fulfillment and that those who really believe God, who are true Jews, will really believe in Jesus. He wants us to see right here at the start that the true God follower, the one who really loves God the Father, will recognize that Jesus is their true King. We must see this. We must. Those who were looking for the King to restore all things have found him. And it's Jesus. I think we'd be foolish to ignore the testimony of those in the know, those who truly understood, who truly grasped the Old Testament, who truly knew what they were looking for and can recognize it when it comes. Perhaps you're planning to invite your friends to come and see, or perhaps you're inviting, investigating Jesus yourself. Well, make sure the Jesus that you come and see is this Jesus, the one described in John's gospel, the real one, the one who is the true King of the kingdom of God, the one who is big enough. And if you're presenting this Jesus to your friends, make sure you present this Jesus, the Jesus that is big enough, the fulfillment of every godly person's every hope. I recently had a conversation with someone who said that all Jesus came to do was to raise people's awareness about important things. And that's not a rare thing to hear. But that Jesus is far too small. And we need to take it from the lips of a true [19:26] Israelite. It's common for people to say that Christians have made Jesus much more important than Jesus ever claimed he was. And again, that is not true. Look at what Jesus says in response to Nathaniel's big declaration. He doesn't say, chill out, Nathaniel. I've just come to raise awareness about important things. He hears Nathaniel. He doesn't disagree. And then he says quite a bit more about himself in the third and final part of the passage in verses 50 and 51. There he says this, he says, watch me and you will see yet greater things. The disciples have seen a small sign here, and it's enough to convince them of who Jesus is. But they get invited again. They get invited to keep watching. Because they are going to see far greater things than they have seen.

They're going to see in verse 51, they're going to see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. There's a lot packed into that statement. There's enough for many more sermons, I'm sure. Here Jesus refers to a dream that Jacob, also known as Israel, had. He was one of the fathers of the Jewish people. And once again, Jesus is claiming here that he is the fulfillment of true Israel, that every true godly person will see him and bow before him. And he's saying that everything promised to Jacob and to Israel is now going to happen through him. And so they really ought to watch closely, to see what Jesus does, and to see the great things that he will do.

Because, as Jesus claims here, through him the curse on the world is going to be lifted. Through him God's kingdom is going to come. And through him God will rule again as father and king. Jesus is claiming here in this short verse that those who follow him ought to watch him. Because if they watch him, they will see everything being put right, true life and true worship coming again. And so as we close this brief talk, let me invite you to continue reading through John's gospel, to keep watching Jesus, to see all of these greater things come to pass as John unpacks the life of Jesus.

Perhaps you've never read this before. Well, read it. Because you will see greater things than what we've just seen in this passage. And if you have read this before many times, then keep on thinking about who you can bring with you through John's gospel. To come and see this Jesus. To show them these greater things as well. We are invited to come and see. To come and see Jesus declared the Messiah, the king of the world. The one who all of the promises of the past point to. And we are invited to keep on watching him. Because if we do, we will see all the great things we long for come to pass.

[22:51] So hear that invitation, listen to it, and think of who else you can invite to come and see. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for these words that reveal clearly who Jesus Christ is.

We pray that you'd help us to see him. Open our eyes. We pray that we won't just read these words. We won't just read about these events. But that we would truly understand who Jesus is. Protect us from having too small an understanding of Jesus. And please help us to delight in showing the true Jesus to others. In Jesus' name. Amen.