

All the baptized have a calling in God’s world. God calls not just pastors and deacons but also the youngest child, like Samuel. The story of the calling of Nathanael 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.

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

And also with you

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
creator of darkness and light,
word of truth,
wind sweeping over the waters.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God, our rock and refuge,

we pour out our hearts before you.

We have known you but have not always loved you.

We have wounded one another and sinned against you.

We have not always recognized the Holy Spirit dwelling in each of us.

Remember your covenant.

Renew your creation.

Restore us,

that we might proclaim your good news to all.

Amen.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters.

God has spoken:

The time of grace is now.

In Jesus, the reign of God has come near.

By the authority of † Jesus Christ,

your sins are forgiven.

You are God’s beloved.

Amen.

Gathering Hymn

“Here I Am, Lord”

#574

Prayer of the Day

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful redeemer, for the countless blessings and benefits you give. May we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day praising you, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Reading from Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

¹LORD, you have searched me out; O LORD, you have known me.

²**You know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar.**

³You trace my journeys and my resting-places and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴**Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, but you, O LORD, know it altogether.**

⁵You encompass me, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

⁶**Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain to it.**

¹³For you yourself created my inmost parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

¹⁴**I will thank you because I am marvelously made; your works are wonderful, and I know it well.**

¹⁵My body was not hidden from you, while I was being made in secret and woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶**Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb; all of them were written in your book; my days were fashioned before they came to be.**

¹⁷How deep I find your thoughts, O God! How great is the sum of them!

¹⁸**If I were to count them, they would be more in number than the sand; to count them all, my life span would need to be like yours.**

The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel according to Saint John 1:43-51

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.”

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, O Christ

Sermon

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Our gospel text today propels us 30 years into the future from where we were last Sunday gathered at the Manger with the Wisemen and their Epiphany, to today where Jesus has begun his Galilean ministry and is starting to call followers.

He has just come from the calling of Andrew, Simon Peter, and another disciple. When Jesus arrives in Galilee he sees Philip and greets him with, “Follow me.” Philip has likely heard of Jesus, perhaps not, because he is from the city of Andrew and Peter. With this knowledge he goes to find Nathanael and tells him that they have “found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.”

Hearing all of that, Nathanael questions, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

It does us well to remember all that is taking place here. There are bits of this whole story that we want to latch onto. And, it does us well to remember our guiding word for 2024 – INVITE. (and no, this was not planned)

We do what Nathanael has done all. Of. The. Time. Essentially, he is questioning the worth of from where Jesus comes. Why would I go follow a man from Nazareth?

We do the same thing. Why would I follow such and such person or teaching? Why would I go worship at such and such place? Why this? Why that? I know the history. Nothing good comes from there!

Conversely, we have the same things to say about ourselves. Why would someone follow me? Why would someone want me to worship with them? Why this? Why that? I know my deepest darkest secrets and they are nothing anyone would want to be a part of!

All of us, at some point in our journey as people of faith, have had those thoughts of depleted worth.

That is the first bit of this story that we want to latch onto. “Nothing good comes from Nazareth.”

The second is the fig tree. Once Nathanael does get up and go with Philip, he encounters Jesus who proclaims, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!”

This is a touch alarming for Nathanael, who simply asks, “where did you get to know me?” And, Jesus simple response is, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called to you.”

Something about this statement about being seen under the fig tree is transformative for Nathanael as he proclaims, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God!”

And, in all of that, we latch onto the fig tree. Is there something special about the fig tree? What is it about the mentioning of the fig tree that changes Nathanael’s perception of Jesus, and from where he came?

But, there is more at play. In both of the call narratives here, first in the one that proceeds this Gospel text, and this one as well, there is a phrase. In the calling of Simon and Andrew they ask Jesus “where do you abide?” When Nathanael tells Philip that they’ve found “him” Nathanael asks, “can anything good come from there?”

And, in both instances, the response that is given is “come and see.”

In both of these instances, the response to these questions is a call to something greater, to be a part of a greater story.

We latch onto the things that we latch onto, and justifiably so, they are often either the headscratching or awe-inspiring moments of these stories.

What if we connect these stories that the disciples lived, to the questions that we often ask us about ourselves?

Instead of Philip saying, “you’re right, nothing good can come from there,” he says, “come and see.” He invites him into the greater story.

And Jesus, instead of saying to Nathanael that he knows that he is trying to remain in the shade of the tree hoping to not be seen, instead is saying, “I see you. I know you. And, I’m calling you anyways.” It has nothing to do with the fact that it is a fig tree, but rather that Nathanael is using it to hopefully remain unseen! Because he knows his story, and much like his questioning of those who come from Nazareth, he feels his story disqualifies him from ever possibly being called.

We are reminded in this that Jesus is God, and that as the Psalmist reminds us, we are known by God long before we were knit together in our mother’s womb. That is what we proclaim and profess to be true.

In doing so we are saying to ourselves and to one another that with all of our failings, all of our shortcomings, all of our own reasons for why nothing good could come from us and our past, our history, the stories we’ve told ourselves, God calls us anyways.

And this call goes both ways. As we think of what it means to live into INVITE this year together, we are reminded that the invite goes beyond the preconceived notions that we may have of ourselves AND those that we are called to invite.

God searches us and knows us and no matter how hard we might try to hide in the shadow of the metaphorical fig tree hoping that our deepest darkest secrets are kept that way, God in Jesus Christ finds us and calls us saying, “Come and see” and we are invited to the greater story taking place, and called to do the same for others.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

Apostle’s Creed**Prayers of Intercession**

As we celebrate Christ embodied in human form, we pray for God’s blessing on the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Encourage the ministry and mission of the church, God of truth. Let the leaders of your church (*especially*) be trustworthy and accountable stewards, that all its resources and outreach bring hope and healing to communities. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

Delight in the goodness of your creation, God of fig trees and fertile soil. Heal areas of the world harmed by human greed. Restore those recovering from natural disaster. Protect our forests and waterways and all the creatures that live in them. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

Call the leaders of every neighborhood and nation to serve faithfully, God of wisdom. Give them visions of justice and unity. Lead them to action that promotes equitable partnership and uplifts those on the margins of society. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

Hold in your care any who suffer and struggle, God of compassion. You who know our inner hearts, be present with any who are oppressed, victims of racism or cultural bias, and all who long for respite or restoration (*We pray especially for Peyton, Matt, David, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Jacob, Cherri, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary*). God of grace,
receive our prayer.

Give this congregation the anticipation and excitement of Samuel, so inspired and empowered to do your work in the world, God of unity. Make us faithful as we build communities of inclusion and mutual care. God of grace,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Trusting God who raised Jesus and will also raise us in spirit and truth, we remember all who have died and are at peace among the saints (*especially the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. whose faithful advocacy for peace and justice continues to embolden the church*). God of grace,
receive our prayer.

Knowing the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, we offer these prayers and the silent prayers of our hearts in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Offering**Offertory Prayer**

Blessed are you, Holy One,
for all good things come from you.
In bread and cup you open heaven to us.
Meet us at this table,
that we receive what we seek
and follow your Son, Jesus,
in whose name we pray.

Amen.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Communion #471 & #466

Prayer

Giver of every gift,
Christ's body is our food, and we are Christ's body.
Raise us to life by your power
for the benefit of all and to your glory,
now and forever.
Amen.

Dismissal

You are God's beloved. Go in peace!
Okay! We will! Thanks be to God!
And all of Good Shepherd said...
AMEN!

Sending Song "Sent Forth by God's Blessing" #547

Blessing

God who names you,
Christ who claims you,
and the Holy Spirit who dwells in you,
✠ bless you and remain with you always.
Amen.

Your Generosity in Action:



THANK YOU!!

Monthly Financials to date:	Total Revenue	Total Expenses	Difference
	\$13,622	\$6,655	\$6,697
	2023: \$35,377	2023: \$27,631	

Your Generosity in Action:

1st Quarter Mission Offering Partner

Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Endowment Fund



THANK YOU!!



Our First Quarter Mission Offering partner is the [Northwest Synod of Wisconsin - ELCA](https://nswwi.org/endowment-fund/today-tomorrow-together) Endowment Fund Appeal. The NWSWI Endowment does incredible work that we have benefited greatly from here at Good Shepherd through various grants as well as Seminary Debt Relief for Pastor Toufar. We are so grateful for their work and this partnership. Now it's time for us to step up and support THEIR work!

You can read more about the appeal here: <https://nswwi.org/endowment-fund/today-tomorrow-together>

Pledge 2024

It is (still) not too late to get your 2024 Commitment into the church office.

If you've pledged a change in your giving, and you give automatically, don't forget to change that in Realm! DeAnne is able to assist you with that process if needed.