Caught By Surprise

Rev. Scott Shetter, August 4, 2019

❖ Opening remarks.
  ➢ It is an exciting day today!
  ➢ It is an honor to be asked to preach on my very first Sunday.
    ▪ And it is also a day where we get to celebrate the Sacrament of Communion together.

❖ Background
  ➢ Surprise birthday parties, unexpected guests, a flat tire.
  ➢ Surprises come in many forms.
    ▪ Some are pleasant.
    ▪ Some are not.
  ➢ Today’s passage contains two surprises.
  ➢ Let us set the stage.
    ▪ John has been introducing us to several people in this first chapter.
      • Jesus
      • John the Baptist
      • Andrew
      • Simon
    ▪ Here, we have finally been introduced to Phillip.
      • He introduces us to Nathaniel.

❖ Nathaniel’s Surprise
  ➢ Having been called by Jesus, Phillip’s first response is one of evangelism.
    ▪ He seeks out Nathaniel to tell him they had finally found the Messiah.
      • This is not necessarily surprising by itself.
        ♦ Many men had come forward in Galilee claiming to be the Messiah, but they were quickly proven false.
  ➢ The first surprise was where Jesus was from.
    ▪ It is not that there was anything negative about Nazareth.
    ▪ There was constant competition among the towns along the Galilean coast.
    ▪ It was a surprise that Jesus, the Messiah, would come out of a competing town.
  ➢ Nathaniel’s skepticism is not wholly unexpected.
    ▪ Philip’s response is to “Come and see.”
    ▪ Philip understood that recognizing the Messiah was related to having a personal meeting with Him.
  ➢ Nathaniel’s second surprise comes when he meets Jesus.
    ▪ First, Jesus says that there is no deceit in Nathaniel.
    ▪ Second, Jesus says that He saw Nathaniel under the fig tree.
    ▪ What Nathaniel immediately recognizes is that Jesus actually knows him without ever having met him.
      • This is why Nathaniel immediately proclaims Jesus’ divinity.
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Isn’t that just the way our God works?
- He takes us by surprise.
- He sees into the deepest parts of us, even the places we like to hide.
- He sees the truth about us, and He still calls us.

Have you found that in your life?
- Have you come to Jesus and found He knew you before you arrived?
- Has He called you despite what you might call your failings?

Here I stand before you.
- I am excited to be here today, because God is at work doing His ministry through us and together with us.
- I never expected to be here.
  - I sensed a call to ministry as a teenager and decided that it was never going to happen.
  - I had other gifts I thought God could use much better.
  - However, God knows me better than I do and while I sat under my fig tree, He was waiting for me to come and see Him.
  - I have learned that God always times things out perfectly.
    - So here I am.
    - Called to ministry here at the Church of the Covenant.
    - Ready to do what God calls in order to see His kingdom grow.
    - I am ready to dig into ministry together with you and see where God takes us on this journey.
    - I will proclaim Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah with you and to you.
    - I will celebrate His death, burial and resurrection with you.
  - I will do all these things because Jesus saw me under the fig tree and waited for me to come and see.
    - When I did come and see, my life was transformed, not because I did not know Jesus, but because I recognized him and became obedient to His call.

What about you?
- Are you still sitting under some fig tree?
- Are you waiting for some sign from Jesus in order to respond to His call in your life?
- Then here is my invitation.
  - Come and see the Messiah – Jesus of Nazareth.
  - Let Him transform your life.
  - You never know what surprise He has in store for you, but I can promise, it is always good.

Closing Prayer
- Heavenly Father, You knew us before we were even born. You know all our highs and low. You know our good and bad. Yet, You call us to come and see and to follow Your
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Son, Jesus. May we have the courage to come out to the shade of our fig trees and into Your glorious presence, in Jesus’ name. Amen.