

## John 1:43-51- “The Lamb King”

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The theme of today’s sermon is “The Lamb King,” based mainly on our Gospel reading and Nathanael’s confession of faith that Jesus Christ is “*the Son of God*” and “*the King of Israel*.”

One of the reasons this incident in the life of Jesus and His disciples is mentioned in the “aha!” season of Epiphany is because it further emphasizes Jesus’ nature not only as a man who could die, but also as God (“aha!”) whose crucified body and blood shed on the cross was the all sufficient payment for our sins; and whose risen body and blood gives and sustains in us eternal life. All because Jesus is not only true man but also true God (aha)!

Jesus’ divine nature as God is revealed in our text by His ability to know where we, like Nathaniel, are both physically and spiritually. Jesus knew not only that Nathanael was under a “*fig tree*” when Philip told him about Jesus, but Jesus also knew what was in Nathanael’s heart. Jesus said that Nathanael was “*an Israelite...in whom there was no deceit*.” This doesn’t mean that Nathanael was without sin, but that there was faith in his heart—faith in God’s forgiveness and salvation through the promised Christ (Genesis 3:15).

The Lord knows all this (where we are physical and spiritual), especially as believers in Him, since He is the One who comes to us through His Word and Spirit to give and sustain this faith in us. We don’t find God, He finds us. While Philip told Nathanael, “*We have found...Jesus*,” what does it say in verse 43? “[*Jesus*] found Philip.”

Working through Philip, the Lord then proceeds to find Nathanael and bring him to faith in Jesus as the Christ, the promised Savior. God’s faith creating presence in the life of Nathanael shines forth in Nathanael’s confession of the truth that Jesus is “*the Son of God*” and “*the King of Israel*.” These words recall God’s OT promise that “*the King of Israel, the LORD*,” will come to judge all people. And those in whom there is no deceit (those who, like Nathanael, have faith in God’s promise of a Savior) will be delivered from their enemies (Zephaniah 3:12-15); namely our sins, death and the devil.

What we know and believe about our Savior, Jesus Christ, is that He is unlike any other king. Instead of coming as a lion king, who demonstrates his power by devouring his enemy (which is what we deserve because of our sins), Jesus comes as “The Lamb King.”

“The Lamb King” demonstrates His power by letting the enemy (sinners like you and me, death, and the devil) devour Him through His death on a cross. In this way, through His passive obedience, Jesus pays for our sins through His body and blood (the body and blood of God). Then...wait for it ...He rises from the dead in victory over our sins, death and the devil to give us His eternal life.

This same truth about the way our “Lamb King,” Jesus Christ, saves us comes across with the mention of Nathanael sitting under a “*fig tree*.” Some of the early Church Fathers/Pastors, like Augustine, associated the fig tree with “*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*” (Genesis 2:17), since after Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate from that tree they tried to cover their shame by sewing together fig leaves (Genesis 3:7).

Therefore, God's call through Philip to Nathanael, when he was under the "fig tree," points to His gracious call to all sinners, like you and me who you could say are (figuratively speaking) under the shadow of those fig leaves, "the shadow of death" (Psalm 23:4), because of our sins. God calls us from our sinful unbelief and the fear of death—the fear of being devoured by God as a lion king because of our sins, to faith in God's gracious love and forgiveness made possible through the sacrifice—the death and resurrection—of "The Lamb King," Jesus Christ.

Jesus concludes our text by telling Nathanael that he would see "greater things than these." Through these words Jesus refers not only to His ability to know where Nathanael was both physically and spiritually, but also to Philip's words earlier when he expressed his God-given faith that Jesus is the one "of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote." The "greater things" would be all the ways Jesus fulfilled God's OT promise to save us, especially through His death, resurrection and ascension into heaven.

Then Jesus refers to His death, resurrection and ascension by reminding Nathanael and us of the OT vision that Jacob had of "a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven...and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28:10-12). But instead of saying that the angels of God were ascending and descending on "a ladder," Jesus said they were "ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

What I noticed when I put these two passages of Scripture, together is that when it says in Genesis that "the LORD stood above" that ladder (Genesis 28:13), the word above in the Hebrew could also be translated "upon" or "on" that ladder. This corresponds with Jesus words which refer to "the angles of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

So, to also conclude this sermon about "The Lamb King," I would like the children to come forward for the children's sermon. Do any of you remember what happened when God's people in the OT tried to build a big tower up into the heavens? (Genesis 11:1-9) [God stopped them by causing them to speak in different languages so they couldn't understand each other. That's why it's called the "Tower of Babel."] What they were thinking would be like me thinking that I can get to heaven by climbing this ladder. Would that be possible? No.

But there was a time when God showed a man named Jacob a ladder that "reached to heaven" (Genesis 28:10-22). Do you know who was at the top or "on" that ladder? ["The LORD," Jesus] This reminds us of Jesus on the cross. Jesus is our ladder—our way to heaven because of what He did for us on the cross. He died to pay for our sins, then He rose from the dead to give us faith that when we die Jesus will take us to heaven with Him.

Who is the way, or ladder to heaven? [Our "Lamb King," Jesus Christ, who died and rose from the dead, and who comes to us through the waters of Holy Baptism and His Word to save us.]

Let's pray. Thank you God the Father for send Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be our "Lamb King" and ladder to heaven through His death and resurrection. Thank you for giving us faith in Jesus through the water of our Baptism and Your Word. Help us, like You helped Philip, to tell this Good News to others. For we pray in the name of our "Lamb King," Jesus Christ. Amen.

All glory be to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.