

“Under the Tree”

Psalm 15; John 1:43-50

January 19, 2025

Introduction

- What's the nicest invitation you've ever received?
- I guess that's really a two-part question.
 - o What's the nicest invitation you've ever received as in a piece of mail or something?
 - o What's the nicest thing anyone's invited you to?
- I was thinking about this this week as I've been in a fair degree of pain.
 - o Nothing makes you think so much as pain to your body, does it?
 - o There're all those extra hours.
- The nicest physical invitation I ever received was from my buddy David to his 12th birthday party.
 - o David was a really artistic guy, his birthday was yesterday if memory serves, and he made this really ornate invitation.
- The nicest invitation I ever received was when my mother-in-law came into town for two weeks upon the birth of our first child.
 - o Man, when she got ready to leave, I about cried I was going to miss her so much.
- I think of invitations today because of our Gospel reading.
- Jesus very simply, very plainly, comes into several lives today and, we know, makes a huge impact on Phillip and Nathaniel's life.
- But I want us to know, Jesus is still doing this with us on an ongoing basis.
 - o He's coming into our lives with a daily invitation for us to participate in HIS life with him, not our life with us.

And while it may seem like we're seeking Him, really listening to this passage helps us understand something – the initiative is divine. You know God because God knew you first.

The key verse for this is “*The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow Me.’*”

Recognizing the Call

- The first step then has to be recognizing how and why Jesus is summoning you presently.
- Notice, Jesus FOUND Phillip, not the other way around.
 - o I want to take a moment and just notice something that you may have overlooked.
 - If you're here, you're here because Jesus found YOU!
 - Let that sink in a moment and just rejoice.
 - OF all the things you must do in this world, pay your taxes, get a job, etc. you've done the most important thing and you didn't do it at all in the first place.
 - o God has chosen you, just as He chose Phillip and Nathaniel.
 - This proves the point of Romans 5:8 – ‘*While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*’
- Jesus' call to Philip happens in the normal course of life. There is no fanfare, just a simple invitation: “*Follow Me.*”
 - o The call of God often comes in seemingly mundane moments—a sermon, a quiet moment in prayer, or through another person's encouragement.
 - It can happen in the strangest of ways sometimes.
 - I preached a sermon once at River Hills Community Church. I don't remember what it was about but it was not about mission, that I'm confident.
 - When we came out though, a man was very desirous to talk to me.
 - o He'd been given a mission during that sermon.
 - It was the coolest thing because my sermon had nothing to do with it, it was all God's summons.
- The summons of God can come at any time and at any place.
- It is helpful if we're listening for it.

- There is something that can awaken us more to the call of Jesus in our lives, it is Christian reflection or meditation.

Brief Outline on Christian Meditation

I. Definition of Christian Meditation

- **What It Is:**
 - A focused, prayerful reflection on God's Word and His presence.
 - Richard Foster: *"Christian meditation is the ability to hear God's voice and obey His Word."*
- **What It Is Not:**
 - Unlike Eastern meditation, which seeks to empty the mind, Christian meditation seeks to fill the mind with Scripture and the knowledge of God.

II. The Biblical Basis for Meditation

- **Scriptural Examples:**
 - *"Blessed is the one...whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on His law day and night."* (Psalm 1:1-2)
 - *"I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways."* (Psalm 119:15)
 - *"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."* (Philippians 4:8)
- **Jesus' Example:**
 - Jesus often withdrew to solitary places to pray and reflect (Luke 5:16).

III. Purpose of Christian Meditation

- **1. To Know God More Deeply:**
 - J.I. Packer: *"Meditation is the activity of calling to mind, and thinking over, and dwelling on, and applying to oneself, the various things that one knows about the works and ways and purposes and promises of God."*
- **2. To Transform the Mind:**
 - *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* (Romans 12:2)
- **3. To Anchor the Heart in Peace:**
 - *"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."* (Isaiah 26:3)

IV. Practical Steps for Christian Meditation

- **1. Choose a Focus:**
 - A Scripture passage, an attribute of God, or a specific prayer need.
 - Example: Meditating on Psalm 23 and imagining the Good Shepherd's care.
- **2. Create Space:**
 - Find a quiet place and eliminate distractions (Mark 1:35).
- **3. Engage the Mind and Heart:**
 - Reflect on the meaning of the text.
 - Ask: What is God saying to me through this?
- **4. Respond in Prayer:**
 - Turn thoughts into worship, confession, and petition.

V. Benefits of Christian Meditation

- **1. Deeper Relationship with God:**
 - A.W. Tozer: *"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."*

- **2. Strength for Daily Life:**
 - *“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?”* (Psalm 27:1)
- **3. Greater Obedience:**
 - *“But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”* (James 1:22)

VI. Encouragement to Practice

- Begin with just five minutes a day.
- Keep a journal to record what God reveals.
- Trust the Holy Spirit to guide you: *“The Spirit helps us in our weakness.”* (Romans 8:26)

Christian meditation is a great way to open you up to hearing the call of Jesus Christ to follow Him much more clearly.

But notice when Jesus does call, what is Nathaniel's first reaction but one of skepticism.

- *“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”*

Responding to the Call

- This is the part I always have trouble with. I want to know ahead of time that everything is going to work out.
 - Sam over in Belmont quotes Hebrews 11:1 to me all the time, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, things left unseen.
- But when responding to a call from Jesus we can be skeptical but we need to take a step out in faith to see what will happen next.
 - One of the most fun times I had in ministry was at River Hills.
 - They wanted to add a contemporary service.
 - I didn't but somehow, I was drafted into the group making it happen.
 - It was so fun. So many people stepping out in faith to do things.
- I was kind of like Nathaniel, can anything good come from a contemporary service?
 - Yes, was the answer, a lot of good things happened.
- FAITH REQUIRES ACTION
 - Faith doesn't mean all doubts are erased but that we trust God enough to take the next step.
 - Example: Abraham's response to God's call to leave his home (Genesis 12:1-4)—he went without knowing the full picture.
- How is God calling you today, what are you being summoned to?
- What are our barriers to responding?
 - Pride
 - Sometimes we may be being led to do something really substantial or humble and we'll think, do I really need to do this?
 - Like, sometimes we think we're better than we really are and pride can make us think we're above doing the work Jesus is calling us to.
 - Fear of the Unknown
 - Jesus summons often leads us away from the safety of the known.
 - This is a chance for us to really trust in Him and walk fully in His path.
 - Busyness
- We can prioritize other things higher than our calling from Jesus our Lord.

Jesus' Assurance in Our Response

1. He Knows Us Completely:

“Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him and said of Him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!’” (John 1:47).

- Jesus demonstrates His intimate knowledge of Nathanael's heart, affirming that He knows us before we even respond to Him.

- Theological Insight: God's omniscience assures us that we are never unknown or unseen (Psalm 139:1-4).
- **2. He Meets Us Where We Are:**
 - Jesus' statement, "*I saw you under the fig tree,*" shows that He recognizes Nathanael's specific situation and speaks to him personally.
 - Application: Jesus meets us in our doubts, fears, and struggles. He doesn't wait for us to have it all figured out before inviting us to follow Him.

Reflecting the Call

- At the end of this, what is Nathaniel's statement?
 - John 1:49 – "*Nathanael answered Him, 'Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!'*"
- When Jesus summons you, you respond by acknowledging Him.
 - Remember our story last week of the wisemen?
 - How when they reached the promised child, they bowed down and gave Him homage along with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.
- The woman that I met doing that contemporary thing.
 - She was timid, but she knew how to play piano.
 - Soon, she was leading worship.
 - Now, she's finishing medical school, ready to help.
 - She looks back on her time with the band and sees her own growth in Christ through it.