

Collins Street Baptist Church

Summer Worship: Prayers & Readings

Sunday January 17

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God
who takes our smallest moment of hope
and grows it forth like a tree
with spreading branches
for the sheltering of new life.

We believe in Jesus Christ
who walks tall among us,
seen in our faces, felt in our hearts,
bedded deep in the longing of our souls
for all that is true, just and full of love.

We believe in the Holy Spirit
who waits on our moments of openness
and springs into the unknowns with joy and delight,
that we might be called on
beyond where we thought we could go,
where every step is walked on holy ground.

Words by Dorothy Macrae-McMahon

Prayer

Healing, sovereign God,
overmatch our resistant ears
with your transforming speech.

Penetrate our jadedness and fatigue.
Touch our yearnings by your words.
Through your out-loudness, draw us closer to you.
We are ready to listen.

Amen.

Words by Walter Brueggemann

Scripture Reading – 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.”

Reflection

Nathanael was not the first, nor the last, person to equivocate when offered a particular path to faith and discipleship. We might sometimes assume that biblical characters were more inclined than we are to follow Jesus without questioning, and some seem to be. But Nathanael, like so many of us, finds scepticism more natural than faith in this instance. While Philip is certain Jesus is the one about whom Moses and the prophets spoke, Nathanael finds the idea improbable. “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” he queries. Philip responds, simply, “Come and see.”

Philip’s invitation rests on his own faith that there is, indeed, something and someone to see. He doesn’t mount an argument or critique Nathanael’s lack of immediate conviction. His invitation to “come and see” is devoid of defensiveness. It is a reminder that we participate in a life of faith, rather than just give our intellectual assent to it.

Participating in faith has looked and felt markedly different in the past year. For some, the opportunity to worship, pray and reflect at home has seen a deepening of personal spiritual disciplines, and has been welcome. For others, the loss of opportunities to practise faith in physical proximity to others has made holding on to any faith at all challenging.

Whilst it will be deeply rewarding (and a great relief) to gather together to worship soon, the invitation to “come and see” is not ultimately about attending church. It is an invitation to participate in the life of God in the world via a whole range of rich and deep possibilities. The church’s worship is one such way, and we treasure it.

What are some of the other ways in which we might “come and see” the one who offers us life today?

Blessing

May God, the giver of life, create in you a new and open heart.

May God, the healer, tend your wounds and refresh your spirits.

May God, the reconciler, break down your barriers and restore your relationships.

And may God, the bringer of the peace that passes all understanding,
renew your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.
