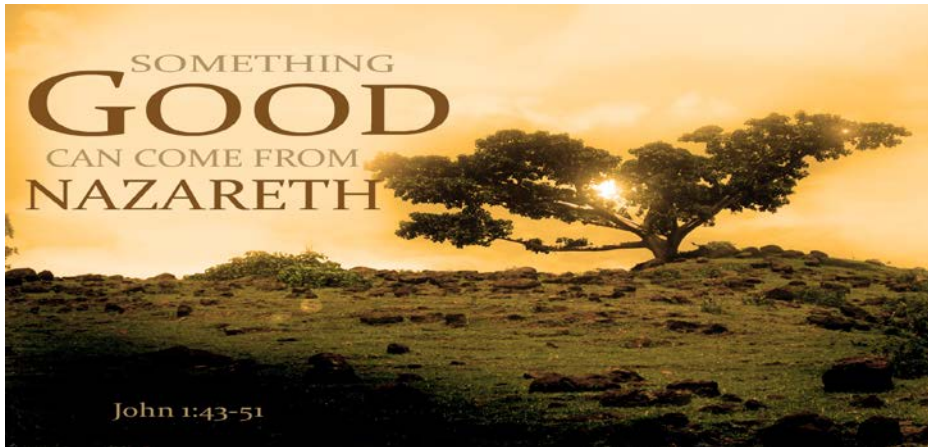


## Worship - Sunday 17th January 2021



Opening music: Will you come and follow me? *Singing the Faith on Worship Cloud*

### Welcome by Hugh Le Fanu

Lord, as we prepare for worship, let your presence come in Jesus's name. We meet as a family, welcoming each other with open hearts and minds.

We ask that your Holy Spirit work within us and make yourself known to us today through our worship, prayers and the reading of your word.

Bless our worship today.

May we hear you speaking. Amen

### Call to worship

Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

### Prayers of Preparation, confession, pardon & petition

Father, it is by Your power that we are continually upheld and sustained. We turn to You as the source of all light and love, all knowledge and truth, all goodness and joy. Help us to lay aside all anxious cares and concerns from our world so that we may commune with You in our worship today. May we be fitted to serve You with a clearer vision and a greater steadfastness.

Merciful Father, we confess with shame how far short we have come of Your will and purpose for us; how far short we have come of what we ourselves hope to be. Show us clearly what You would have us be and do and what we must give up to be worthy of our calling as disciples of Jesus Christ. Cleanse us from every stain of past life; deliver us from its evil power and grant us Your forgiveness and peace.

Lord, You have given us a place and part in the fellowship of Your disciples. Make us faithful to our vocation. Help us to put first our loyalty to You. Save us from putting our trust in the abundance of our possessions but rather make us true stewards of all You have given us.

Give us courage among the careless to be bold to show our concern; among those who deny You may we be forward to confess You; and, if we are scorned because we dare to follow You, may we conduct ourselves with patience and courage. Increase our faith that we may find our true confidence in You; increase our hope that we may never be daunted nor doubt the ultimate victory of Your kingdom; increase our love that, all fear being cast out, we may ever seek to overcome evil with good.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord in whose name we are bold to pray together in the words Jesus taught us:

**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, the power and the glory, for ever and  
ever. Amen**

**Reading:** John 1: 43 – 51 read by Moray Henderson

<sup>43</sup>The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." <sup>44</sup>Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup>Philip 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." <sup>46</sup>Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." <sup>47</sup>When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" <sup>48</sup>Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." <sup>49</sup>Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" <sup>50</sup>Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." <sup>51</sup>And 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:**

May I speak in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

This Sunday is generally associated with the call of the disciples. Today's reading features a lesser known man named Nathaniel. He is presented as a devout and upright Jew. He's also a highly intelligent and well-read man. As convert material, Nathaniel's no pushover.

There are two things I want to bring out of this story. Firstly, Philip is already a disciple and, having found the friendship of Jesus, is

keen to share Jesus with his old friend, Nathaniel. Nathaniel is completely underwhelmed by this suggestion. On being told that Jesus comes from Nazareth, he bluntly and rather snobbishly replies, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Nazareth was and, I'm afraid I can say from personal experience, is still, a bit of a dump. Hardly a place from which you'd expect any spiritual enlightenment to emerge. Nathaniel is, to say the least, sceptical and is not prepared to take Philip's recommendation at his word. But, on meeting Jesus, he moves from "Can anything good come out of Nazareth" to his acknowledgement of Jesus as the Christ: "Rabbi," he says, "you are the son of God." And, at the very end of the gospel, Nathaniel is there by the lakeside, still a committed member of the Christian community.

Nathaniel is the sort of man who will always ask questions: a man who has to find out for himself and won't take anything in the way of second-hand experience.

Perhaps some of you will recognise in Nathaniel a little of yourself. Perhaps we began our faith journey in scepticism. I know I did. Then, by reflection and study and questioning, we arrived at conviction. I believe that mature faith is a journey which never ends; I still ask questions.

Might a healthy church need a broad spectrum of outlook and belief to function fruitfully and well? Expecting everyone in church to believe the same thing says more to me about spiritual defensiveness and lack of confidence. Growing in faith depends on asking questions. Sadly, I believe, that too many Christians want black and white answers in a very grey world.

As part of my ministry in the army, I always ran Bible Study groups. In one of these groups, we had people who loved to dig deep and challenge each other's assumptions. One evening, we were joined by a new member. She came from a fundamentalist background. As the debate raged around her, she suddenly clamped her hands over her ears and shouted out, "Will you all please stop it? You're making me think and I don't want to." That was very illuminating.

For her, to admit any doubt or ask questions would challenge her fragile need for security and certainty. In any church we need sceptical people to challenge our certainties. But we also need people of strong faith to provide stability and a sense of purpose. We need both.

My second point is to draw attention to the way Philip calls Nathaniel to meet Jesus. He invites Nathaniel to come and see Jesus just as Andrew invited Simon Peter to come and see Him too. I believe that not very many people have ever been argued into becoming a Christian. Very often arguments become exercises in point scoring and do more harm than good. The only way to convince a person of the importance of Jesus is to confront them with Him. Tell people the story about Jesus; tell them the story of the cross.

Take the life of Jesus, read it in the gospels, live with it, pray about it, come to know him. Feel the love that pours out of Him: go to Calvary and watch Him dying; he can open up the way of God for us all. You learn about Jesus and you come to know Him and see God in Him.

But it's not just a matter of telling people about Jesus. We show Christ by living as He did. And this is one almighty challenge. My favourite Roman Catholic saint is Mother Theresa of Avila. She challenges us in these words, "Christ has no body on Earth but yours, no feet but yours, yours are the eyes through which is now to look out Christ's compassion on mankind. Yours are the feet with which he is to walk the ways of the world. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless us now." We are to do two things: speak about Jesus and live His life.

I remember a story I once heard of a man who became a medical missionary so he could work with the native Americans. Training over, he was assigned to a reservation deep in the prairies. On arrival, he went about his job faithfully and was referred to by everyone as 'the white man'. Based on their past experience, the native Americans were reserving judgement.

One winter, he set off on foot on a visit to an outlying farm. The weather could change in minutes in this area and soon he found himself in a howling snowstorm. It was eighteen miles back to the village and he wasn't sure he would make it. On turning a corner, he came across one of the Native Americans lying on the ground, having been thrown from his horse. The man had a broken leg and the beginnings of frostbite.

The missionary knew he would die if he was left and, without any hesitation, he heaved him up on to his shoulders and carried him through the blizzard. The effort involved was agonisingly painful and soon his muscles were burning. He kept on going and, against all the odds, he made it back to the reservation. He took the man into his own quarters, treated the frostbite and rest the broken leg. For several weeks he nursed the man until he was better. This was closely watched by everyone on the reservation. They called him, from that moment onwards, 'the good white man'.

A year later, a deadly disease came to the reservation. The doctor worked every hour of the day, moving from tent to tent, heedless of his own safety. He didn't save the lives of everyone but he saved the lives of the majority. They then gave him a new name, 'the man from God'.

Native Americans have a saying: "Example is the tallest kind of preaching".

Let me now close with a very old story from the Christian tradition. It's an incredibly challenging story and not a little worrying. In telling you this, I'm not only challenging you, I'm challenging myself.

It's set in heaven, as the latest batch of Christian souls ascend after death. As they enter through the pearly gates, they are watched by gathering crowds of angels. The angels become very excited, breathlessly nudging each other, and saying, "Don't they all remind you of Jesus?" That's our challenge: do we remind people of Jesus?

**Hymn:** Brightest and Best of the Sons of the morning (*Tune: Epiphany*)

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,  
Dawn on our darkness and lend us Thine aid;  
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,  
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Cold on His cradle the dewdrops are shining;  
Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall;  
Angels adore Him in slumber reclining,  
Maker and Monarch and Saviour of all!

Say, shall we yield Him, in costly devotion,  
Odours of Edom and offerings divine?  
Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,  
Myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,  
Vainly with gifts would His favour secure;  
Richer by far is the heart's adoration,  
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,  
Dawn on our darkness and lend us Thine aid;  
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,  
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Lord God, we bless You for the gospel of Christ; for the good news He gave to the world of Your justice, love and compassion. We thank You for the hope we have of Your kingdom and for the privilege that is ours in being part of Christ's body, the church.

For all the friendship and encouragement that we have found within the church's fellowship; for the presence of the Holy Spirit acting in our lives, sometimes in spite of our obstructiveness; for

the joys of home and family life, we give praise and thanks to You who have planned and given us all things.

We bring before You, Father, in prayer the needs of the whole church of Christ around the world. Help her to hold out to everyone the way of faith in all the confusions and challenges of our age. To all who guide and serve the church, grant the humility and love without which no work can be done for Christ. We pray for our Sovereign lady, the Queen, and all who serve in the high courts of parliament, that Your wisdom may guide them in their policies and their decisions and we pray for the peace of the world – that it may be a true peace, inspired by the sense of brotherhood and sisterhood within the human family. Draw us nearer to the day when all the nations will cooperate against disease and prejudice and hunger.

Lord God, be with all suffering people. We pray for all who are ill, all who are dying, all who are bereaved. We pray especially this day for all who are suffering through the ravages of Covid 19. We pray that You will be with the sick, that You will strengthen the efforts of the doctors, nurses and paramedics in our hospitals and surgeries. Uphold them as they bravely face the dangers of their profession.

We pray that You will be with all who face unemployment and all who are confined to their home, especially those who live alone. In a moment's silence, Father, we bring before You those known to us whose needs we now lay before You.

May Your love and Your peace reach through to them even when we feel powerless to help; and may the example of Christ's suffering and the knowledge of His understanding be a constant inspiration to them all.

For all the men and women who have laboured through the centuries to build up the church of Christ, we give You thanks. We praise You that our fear of death has been removed by Christ's

own death and resurrection; and that You, who are the origin of all life, are also the fulfilment of our lives. Bring us safely to our destiny, Lord, by whatever paths You know in Your wisdom to be right and necessary for us. Grant that when our journey in the world is finished, it may lead us to that welcome in the world beyond all space and matter, which the Lord of life has promised to His people.

All our prayers we bring before You in His name, our crucified and risen Saviour, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. **Amen**

### **Blessing:**

May the blessing of the eternal God be upon us and upon our work and worship together, His light to guide us, His presence to strengthen us, His love to unite us, now and always. **Amen.**

Closing music: Love came down at Christmas (*Gartan*)

Responses led by Tom Dean

Opening music [STF 673 - Will You Come And Follow Me part of Singing The Faith; Contributed by Paul Wood & Ian Worsfold | The Worship Cloud](#)

Closing music <https://www.smallchurchmusic.com/Snippet/S-LoveCameDown-PipeL1C-48-CAM.mp3>

Hymn: [STF 227 - Brightest And Best part of Singing The Faith; Contributed by Paul Wood & Ian Worsfold | The Worship Cloud](#)

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