

## DIVINE INSIGHT

John the Baptist, as you know, travelled around preaching repentance and proclaiming the coming of the messiah.

He prepared the way. He prepared people by demanding the purging by repentance that invites a new way of seeing.

John's sole purpose was to get people ready to receive Jesus.

According to the Gospel of John, the first time John the Baptist looked at Jesus, when Jesus was walking toward him, he declared, "Here is the lamb of God."

How did John know? What did he see?

Was there something about Jesus.... or.... John.... or both?

The next day, John the Baptist was standing with two of his disciples when he saw Jesus walk by. And again, John declared who he saw, yet with an added invitation for disciples.

He said, "Look, here is the Lamb of God."

LOOK.

The declaration must have made an impression on the two because they began to follow behind Jesus on the Judean trail, heading North to Galilee.

John the Baptist didn't join them. His time/ his ministry of preparation was over.

When Jesus noticed them behind him, he turned and asked, "What are you looking for?"

What are you looking for?

And note, simply following wasn't adequate. They needed to know why, and they needed to say it in words.

Their fumbled reply revealed that they were not sure, yet something was drawing them to Jesus, when they answered, "Where are you staying?"

Jesus was likely hoping for a little more depth in their response—something, perhaps, that would indicate that "Life" / understanding was coming into focus, but at this point, they were struggling to see.

Prodding them onward—to a deeper pursuit—Jesus answered, "Come and see." Come..... and you Will see.

The next day, and this is where today's text begins, Jesus was in Galilee. Galilee is on the Northern fringe of Palestine. It is a pagan area. Galilee means "circle of Gentiles", even so, many Jews live there, too.

If we were dealing with Mennonites in Canada, then Judea could be the Eastern or Western reserve in Southern Manitoba,..... or perhaps the Kitchener/Waterloo area of Ontario. Galilee would be Saskatchewan.

Philip was from the same town in Galilee that Andrew and Peter were from. Also, Philip was a Jew, but he had a Greek name.

It is interesting that most of the disciples that Jesus called were not purebreds; they were not model, top pedigree Jews.

So, in our example,... Philip was from Osler, a fair little town, albeit a bit pretentious, yet....still a respectable place.

Philip was paying for his gasoline at the Esso station in Osler. Jesus was already inside eating a slice of pizza.

Upon seeing Philip, or as the scripture puts it, “He Found Philip,” Jesus said to him, “Follow me.”

Follow me???? Just “Follow me”... nothing else????

Absent is any form of persuasive reason. Jesus didn’t even say who he was, nor did he make any promises to Philip. Moreover, there was no tug on the heart—no emotional appeal whatsoever.

\*Many of us think we have to use good arguments and sound doctrine to convince people to follow Jesus. And, some people think that fear and emotional appeals are necessary, but ..... maybe it is seeing Jesus that gives us the desire to be followers???? ???

Back to the story:

Philip was one of those who could see / recognize Jesus right away, just as John the Baptist did. I’m wonder how that is???

Anyways, Philip hurried to his car where Nathanael was waiting,...sitting in the passenger seat, reading Dobson’s “Focus on the Family” book.

Nathanael was a studious, confident person; he hoped one day to be a great religious leader. He was also from Osler, and active in his church and conference.

Excitedly, Philip yelled through the window, “We have FOUND him—the one Moses and the prophets wrote about. He’s Jesus the son of Joseph from Warman.

\*Notice the “WE... have found HIM. It’s funny how we get confused about who found whom. It was Jesus who found him.

(Moreover, one would think a Messiah would, at least, come from Winkler.... or maybe from St. Jacobs, Ontario.)

Was Nathanael reply, “Can anything good come out of Warman?” based on the haughtiness of a friendly town rivalry.... or ....was because he knew the scriptures said nothing about a Messiah from Galilee who was a son of Joseph?

Either way, his response was berating and judgmental.

Philip reacted by saying, “Well,... Come and SEE”...assuming Nathanael would See as he had.

Philip opened the car door, pulled Nathanael out, and pulled him into the gas station.  
Jesus had just taken a huge bite from his pizza, and sauce and cheese were spilling into his beard.

Nathanael raised an condescending eyebrow.  
Jesus wiped his beard with a napkin, and observed Nathanael’s countenance.  
Jesus could have been aggressively, defensive and said, “Well... Mr. Hot Shot...., who do you think you are?”

But instead, Jesus wasn’t distracted by the outward behaviour or appearance. Jesus saw beyond the facade / beyond Nathanael’s crafted persona. Jesus saw Nathanael as Nathanael saw himself, and said to him, “Here is truly a fine and honest person.”

That comment summed up who Nathanael believed himself to be,... or at least, aspired to be.

Nathanael was amazed and completely disarmed.

With surprise stuck in the back of his throat, he asked Jesus, “Where did you get to know me?”

Jesus answered, “I SAW you.... I saw you before Philip came to you.”  
I saw you.....searching for something true / something divine.  
I saw you.

Nathanael was awestruck.

Imagine how it would feel to meet someone who completely knew you.. .... who knew everything about you—everything,..... and who receives you as you,..... no questions asked? Imagine!

In astonishment, Nathanael proclaimed, “You are the King of Israel.  
You are the Son of God.”

Jesus replied, “Have I dazzled you? Is that why you say that?  
Do you really see?”

Jesus continued, “You Will see much more than the label or the miracles. You Will SEE much more.”

This “SEEING” that breaks down barriers and causes people to drop everything, changes directions and follow Jesus ... is Inward / inside ... ..soul seeing.

It is seeing without the superficial distractions.  
It is seeing the inner person / the real person –the person with the image of God / with the spark of God.

This “divine” ... Inward vision connects with persons passions / aspirations, and it touches the latent love that dwells within the soul.

Stereotypes, reputations, even outward behaviours are not in focus when one truly sees / looks at another person for who she/he really is.

It is a divine gift; it is love beyond our self focus that gives a person this ability to truly see..... to see in the way Jesus is beckoning others to see.

Arising from our Winter Study on Romans, Paul mentioned an inner longing / a deep groaning that we have / a yearning to connect with God / to love and be loved.

I think the inner essence is what Jesus saw in others, and that vision to the heart invited / allowed others to respond / to see in a similar manner, too.

I believe we truly want to be seen / received in that gracious and accepting manner,..... and we appreciate the value in being able to see others that way, too.

To see through the surface / to clearly be seen and received is a wonderful, freeing and empowering encounter.

Many, many years ago, in a mental institution near Boston, Massachusetts, a young girl known as “Little Annie” was locked in a dungeon. This was one of the more enlightened institutions for the mentally disturbed. However, the doctors felt that dungeon was the only place for one so hopelessly insane. They saw no hope for Little Annie, so she was confined to that small cage which had little light,... and even less hope.

One day, an elderly nurse was nearing retirement. She could “see”,... and she felt there was hope for All God’s creatures, so she started taking her lunch into the dungeon, and eating it outside Little Annie’s cage.

She believed she could communicate some love and hope to the little girl.

In many ways, Little Annie was like an animal. Sometimes she would violently attack people. Other times, she would completely ignore them, but those behaviours were merely outward / measurable actions.

When the elderly nurse started visiting her, Little Annie gave no indication she was even aware of her presence....next to her cage.

After a number of lunchtime visits, the elderly nurse, one day, brought some cookies along, and left them outside the cage.

Little Annie gave no hint she knew they were there, but when the nurse returned the next day, the cookies were gone.

From then on, the nurse brought cookies whenever she visited. Soon, the doctors noticed a remarkable change in Annie.

After a time, they decided to move her upstairs.

Finally, the day came when this “hopeless case” was told she could return home.

But, Little Annie did not wish to leave. She wanted to work with people who needed care and compassion. The elderly nurse saw hope / the divine her... and thus... had been such an encouragement to her that Little Annie wanted to help others, too. Inspired by the nurse, Little Annie could see who others really were—God’s children.

Many years later, Queen Victoria was pinning England’s highest award on another woman, Helen Keller.

The queen asked Helen how she accounted for her remarkable accomplishments in life, in spite of being blind and deaf.

Without a moment’s hesitation, Helen Keller said that she could have done nothing... if it were not for her wonderful, loving teacher Anne Sullivan. And, Anne Sullivan was none other than “Little Annie.”

Anne Sullivan treated Helen Keller as one of God’s children... one with the divine gift of love inside her soul.

Anne loved her; seeing potential, Anne pushed her and worked with her. She prayed and played with Helen, until Helen became a beacon of encouragement to people all over the world.

Helen Keller influenced millions after her own life was touched by “Little Annie.”

And, “Little Annie” was rescued from tragic oblivion by the care and encouragement of an elderly nurse,..... whose name we don’t even know. She was someone who could see..... who could see Jesus / who could see God... beyond the superficial distractions.

Jesus saw inside Nathanael. He saw who he really was.... a person full of potential, integrity and the capacity for blossoming love.

Jesus’ vision enabled Jesus to know him.

The Psalmist talks about how God knows all about us.

God knows our deepest, darkest, hidden self.... our true self, and God’s vision is like that of a loving parent—it nurtures,... encourages and pulls the good out to the open, and lovingly accepts who we are. That loving vision sees potential / the seed of the divine spark.

Verse 12 of Psalm 139, states that even the darkness is as light to God.

Divine insight draws us to the light, and in the light we can see, too.

In the light / the light of the divine... darkness, all that that means,... fades away.

This loving knowledge and acceptance / this divine insight does not make us special, better or entitled. It simply inspires us to be..... to be who we are—no better and no worse than anyone else.

It doesn't matter where we've been,...what we have done,... what our outward behaviour is,...or how we are pretending.

It doesn't matter what the expectations are or the assumptions.

One's reputation, lineage or family tree doesn't matter.

It doesn't matter what our last name is, our heritage, our culture, our sexual orientation, our political bend or the shade of our skin.

God sees who we really are, and accepts that, loves us....and fills us with light so we can see.....  
if we so chose to leave our cave.

In Jesus time, many could not see Jesus..... and remained in their darkness. ... because they were afraid to see or be seen.

Leaving our cave is called repentance.

Consider if you were completely known..... every secret..... and accepted with out prejudice or judgment.

How does that exposure feel?

To be known and unconditionally loved,..... will set our hearts on fire.

It will pull us out of our dungeon,... and help us to see the divine in each other.

All children thrive when there are no secrets, when there is NO punishment, when love prevails,... when they are accepted for who they are and allowed to reach out to be who they really are—aspire to be.

We are God's children....., and it is never too late to grow up—to be adult children.

It is never too late to see the divine in others,..... and to be seen.