

The Master's Men Part 2: Philip and Bartholomew

Scripture: Matthew 10:3

Code: 2273

We're looking today at Matthew 10 and particularly verses 2 through 4, which give us the names of the disciples, the 12 apostles. And today I want us to focus our thinking on a very basic question. As we came to the tenth chapter I really faced a decision: whether to just read the list and go on with the tremendous material about discipleship that's in the chapter, or whether to stop and look at each individual in the list. And because I believe they were so special, and so wonderful, and so uniquely called of God I couldn't resist the opportunity that faced me to take each one individually and see who these 12 really were. And then, to ask this basic question: what kind of people does God use for His purposes? What kind of men did Jesus choose? When we think of the 12 apostles we are prone to think of stained glass saints. People without faults, people who have been canonized, people who manifest none of the failures of humanness that beset us. And if we do that, we're wrong. Because they are people just like us, specially called, specially transformed, specially trained and specially sent by Christ, but people just like us.

Now, we live in a very qualification-conscious society. There are qualifications for just about everything. In fact, as I was flying to Boston on Wednesday, I had a copy of the Los Angeles Times. And I thought, you know, it might be interesting to just read through all of the classified section on job opportunities, and see if I can refresh my mind about qualifications, and what the world demands. And so, I read the whole classified section, all the jobs that were being offered and some of them were fascinating in terms of qualification. For example, one said: "Wanted: copywriter, must be self-motivated, able to work under pressure, willing to travel, journalism graduate, minimum three years' experience, 50 words per minute typing, must have own transportation." It didn't say a word about whether he could write or spell. Another one said: "Wanted: chef, must be able to prepare all Japanese specialty foods and make French pastry, and must have had minimum two years' experience at both." You're liable to find sushi in your éclair.

Another one that I thought was interesting said: "Wanted: senior tax consultant and accountant by fast growing Century City firm, applicant must be familiar with the taxation of estates and trusts and be able to do tax research, a minimum of two years tax experience and a certified public accountant are necessary, softball skill is not required but would be helpful." And it just went on like that page after page after page. All of these qualifications. Our society has set up standards for everything and for everybody.

Life is made up of qualifying. Every time you want to buy a house, you have to qualify. And when you want to buy a car, you have to qualify. And when you want to get a credit card, you have to qualify. And when you want to apply for a job, you have to qualify. And when you want to get into a career area, you have to qualify. When you want to sign up at a school, you have to qualify. When you want to be trained for something, you have to qualify. When you want to join a team, you have to qualify. It seems like everything you have to do requires qualifying. Somebody establishes standards that you have to meet. Society has determined that it's only going to use qualified people.

Now, what qualifications does God have? What does God require of those who serve Him? Of those who are called to be His disciples, His apostles? What kind of people does Jesus use in His ministry? What kind of people does it take to advance His eternal Kingdom? Are you ready for this? Frankly, folks, nobody is qualified. Nobody. Therefore, God only has one alternative: use the unqualified to do the impossible. That is essentially how God works. He takes the unqualified. Does that make you feel better? It does me. God uses unqualified people, moves into their life with saving sanctifying grace, and Himself transforms them into usefulness.

I know you're probably like I am: you get discouraged about your own failures. I do. This has been confessedly a very difficult year for me at Grace, and particularly so in the last four or five months. I have been discouraged on numerous occasions, extremely discouraged. And most of the time the basis of my discouragement stems from my own failures. And I often question how God can use me and why God doesn't use somebody else and is He through using me, and whenever I get into that thing of questioning whether God can use me I just go back to the Bible to see the people He used there. Because frankly, they're a fairly pitiable lot themselves.

I mean, there was Noah who got drunk and conducted himself in a lewd way. There was Abraham who doubted God, lied about his wife and then committed adultery. And then, there was Isaac who learned how to sin from his father, did the same thing with his wife Rebekah and lied to Abimelech. And then, there was Jacob who literally extorted the birthright from Esau, deceived his father, and who raised a whole bunch of immoral children. Then, there was Joseph who was hated by all his brothers. And then, there was Moses. Moses was a murderer. Moses acted in pride trying to steal God's glory, and struck the rock instead of obediently speaking to the rock as God said and he never entered the promised land he had led the people to. And there was Aaron. Aaron, the high priest who led Israel in the worship of the golden calf and the accompanying orgy. And then, there was Joshua. God told Joshua to wipe out the Gibeonites, but he was so deceived by the Gibeonites that he made a treaty with them instead of destroying them, and they hung around to trouble Israel endlessly. Then, there was Gideon. Gideon who had no confidence in himself, and even less confidence in God's plan and God's power. And there was Samson who was marked as a man with a lustful love for a wretched woman. And there was Ruth in the Messianic line and yet an accursed Moabitess. And there was Samuel, and he began to serve God as a little kid, what did he know? And David, the all-time ladies man. Every time he saw a lady he liked he married her. Didn't matter how many others he

had. An adulterer, a murderer, a lousy father, and a man with such bloody hands God wouldn't even let him build a temple. And then, there was Solomon the world's leading polygamist.

And it goes on like that. God used Isaiah who had put his trust in a human king. God used Ezekiel who was a brash, tough, strong-minded, crusty, say-what-you-think priest. And God used Daniel who was educated in a pagan country and taught the wisdom of the bitter and hasty Chaldeans. And God used Hosea, who married a prostitute. And God used Jonah who defied Him in direct disobedience, and took a short ride on a long fish. And then, when the Gentiles were converted, he didn't like it one bit. And God used Habakkuk who questioned the divine plan. And God used Elijah who could handle 850 false priests and prophets, but ran like a maniac from one woman, Jezebel. And God used Paul who killed Christians. And God used Timothy who was ashamed of Jesus Christ, and had to be told so by Paul.

You see, you just follow the flow of history and it's the march of the unqualified, is what it is. They're unqualified. And when you look at the 12, you know what? You just meet a group of unqualified folks like all the rest. Now, remember what I told you, the 12 are divided into three groups of four. Notice verses 2 through 4, you have 12 names. They're always in three groups: four, four and four. And there are four different lists in the Bible of the 12, and always each name appears in the same group of four. The first four were the most intimate. The next most intimate were the next four. And finally the last group is the least intimate with Christ. But they were all there, and they were all trained, and they were all sent, and they all had a marvelous and effective ministry, with the exception of Judas Iscariot who was replaced. Not all of them had the same level of intimacy with Christ. Not all of them had the same gifts and talents and ministries. Yet, they all preached, and they all proclaimed, and they all advanced the Kingdom. They all carried the message, but they were very special unique individual people.

In business today if somebody was coming along and saying, I want 12 people to do this, there would be a string of qualifications a mile long and they would have figured out exactly the kind of person they wanted, and get 12 just like that. Not the Lord. He picked 12 unqualified people who were so diverse it's incredible. And they all had problems. And they all had sins. Even the best of them. It's just a list of the unqualified.

Now, Jesus never intended to go through the work of proclaiming the Kingdom alone. That's why when He began His ministry He began it not only by preaching and teaching but by training men with Him at the same time He began His ministry. He never intended to be alone with it. He was training them all the while so that when He left they'd carry it on. And these are the ones He chose. They are the ambassadors of the King. Matthew is presenting to us the King. In every part of the Matthew gospel the King, the King, the King stands forth. Jesus is the King, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ, the Son of God, the promised King. And the King has His ambassadors, and that is who we meet here. Later on in Matthew 19 and verse 28, Jesus said to these His ambassadors, "I say

unto you, that ye who have followed Me,” that is the 12, “in the regeneration, or the Kingdom, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you also shall sit upon 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel.” Ultimately, the 12 would sit on the 12 thrones judging the tribes of Israel in the 1,000 year millennial Kingdom. And they will inherit far more than they’ve ever given up, He says in the next verse. And they may have been last in this world’s eyes but ultimately they’ll be first. So, He promises them grandiose promises as His ambassadors which they’ll inherit in the Kingdom.

Now, as we come to chapter 10 we’re getting an insight into how He trained these 12. But before we look at the specifics of His instruction to them, we’re meeting them. And we met the first four, and it was a very comforting to meet them, wasn’t it? Because they were very much like us. What kind of people are qualified for the Lord’s work? What kind of people does Jesus use? Well, He uses, we learned, dynamic, strong, bold leaders like Peter, who take charge, who initiate, who plan, who strategize, who confront, who rebuke, who command people to Christ, and who frankly often talk a better game than they play, and often act too hastily, but are usually eager to be forgiven and restored. And, our Lord uses humble, gentle, inconspicuous, quiet souls like Andrew, who seek no prominence, never preach to crowds, but quietly bring individuals to Christ. And then, He uses zealous, passionate, uncompromising, task-oriented, insensitive, ambitious dynamos like James, who wind up getting killed because nobody can handle him. They see only a job to do and they’ll die getting it done. And He also uses sensitive, loving, believing, intimate, truth-seekers like John, who speak in love and attract men to Christ.

Now, that was just group one and what a diversity. Now, let’s go on and look at group two, and we’re going to cover two of them this time, and two of them next time.

First is verse 3: “Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector.” That’s group two. Next group comes James, Lebbaeus or Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot.

But let’s look, first of all, at Philip. This is not to be confused with Philip, the deacon in Acts 6 who later became an evangelist, this is Philip the disciple. His name is a Greek name. Now, all 12 were Jews so he must have had a Jewish name, but we don’t know his Jewish name. For some reason he goes always by his Greek name. And by the way, his Greek name means lover of horses. We don’t know whether his parents were big on that and so they just gave him that Greek name or what. But he’s always gone by the name of Philip. We don’t know his Jewish name, which is kind of interesting because when the Greeks later on want to see Jesus, they go to Philip so he kind of became the Greek connection. He was the place where you sort of plugged in from the Greek level, and maybe they felt comfortable because his name was the Greek name. He is always in the second list and he is always at the head of the second list, which means that he seems to have been the sort of the leader of the second group. It’s hard to imagine that, because he doesn’t really have those kinds of gifts, but he may have led more than they followed, we’re not sure.

Now, for a while he was a fellow townsman at Bethsaida, and you remember that Bethsaida up in Galilee was the town where Peter and Andrew came from, so Philip knew Peter and Andrew. He had perhaps grown up knowing them, perhaps was a close friend of theirs. Since they were all God-fearing Jews, Peter, Andrew, Philip and Nathanael or Bartholomew, we'll get to him later, they probably all knew each other. They were close friends. And there is in the 12 the very obvious fact that there's a lot of friendship interwoven there. There was some one-by-one callings of these individuals, one to another, to another, to another. And so, Philip was kind of in the group.

He may well have been a fisherman. He appears later on with Andrew, and with Peter, and with James, and with John, in John 21 fishing. The three gospels say nothing about him, just his name, nothing else. But John's gospel mentions him four times. And we really get to know him in these four passages. Let's look together at John 1:43, and let's meet Philip. And let's ask the question again, "What kind of people can God use?"

Philip will come off as anything but a stained glass saint. Verse 43: "The day following," and that means the day following Peter and Andrew having an encounter with Christ, the day following the time when John the Baptist pointed to Christ and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God," and Peter and Andrew followed Him. "The day following that Jesus would go forth into Galilee and findeth Philip and saith unto him, 'Follow Me.'" Now, that is the first direct call of a disciple. Peter and Andrew had already met Christ but they had sort of found Him, they had sort of come along. But Philip is the first individual to whom the Lord expressly said, "Follow Me." He walked up and found him and said "Follow Me."

But may I hasten to add that Philip also had a seeking heart. God doesn't find people against their will. He had a seeking heart. And if you look at verse 45, after verse 44 where it says he was from Bethsaida where Andrew and Peter lived, it says Philip then went to find Nathanael, or Bartholomew same person, and said to him, "We have found Him." Now, from the Lord's viewpoint, He found Philip; from Philip's viewpoint, he found the Lord. And isn't that the way your testimony goes? The sovereign side is that God found you; the human side is that you found Christ. And in order for it to happen both of you had to be seeking. "The Son of Man has come into the world to seek and save that which is lost, if you seek with Me with all your heart you shall surely," what? "Find Me." It is God seeking, it is man seeking. God seeks that true heart that seeks Him. And so, Philip was seeking the truth. Philip was seeking that reality. In verse 45 he says, "We found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write." In other words, he must have been studying the law and the prophets, he must have been exposing himself to that, and now he says we found Him, and His name is Jesus, He comes from Nazareth and He is Jesus bar Joseph, the son of Joseph. We found Him.

But in a real sense there was no human agency, Jesus just came right up and said, "Follow Me." There was no human voice directed to him. Philip's eyes and ears were open, his heart was open.

And when he heard the divine voice say, "Follow Me," he ran to tell Nathanael that he had found Him. That the Messiah was here. And you can imagine the excitement and the thrill and the joy and the ecstasy. In fact, he even wanted to bring Nathaniel, at the end of verse 46, he says, "Come and see. Come and see. Find out for yourself."

Now, what do we learn about Philip? First thing we learn about him is he was seeking the Messiah. He was a God-fearing Jew. He was religious and he was truly religious. He had an honest heart. We also learn that his response when being found was to find somebody else. And I'm convinced that the greatest source for evangelism is friendship. I think friendship provides the most fertile soil for evangelism. Don't you? Because there's already a relationship of love. And into that relationship of love you can introduce the reality of Christ. Invariably, and I say this through years of experience, invariably when somebody becomes a Christian, their first reaction in the warmth and the joy of that new found life is to find a friend and tell that person what has happened. And by the way, if you've lost that, then that's only a sad commentary on one of two things: one, you don't have any unchristian friends; or two, you don't care anymore. Both are tragic. But Philip immediately went to Nathaniel. The immediate response to salvation is evangelism: find somebody else and tell them the good news.

You know, I've noticed this just in Baptism. People who are saved and told they should be baptized respond instantly. And most frequently, joyously want to give their testimony. People who have been saved way in the past, and failed to be baptized, when years later they face the fact that they should be obedient and do that, very often won't do it because they hesitate to stand up in front and give their testimony. And it's a commentary on what happens to the heart when that first love begins to grow cold. It's not always that case, but very often that is true.

Well, Philip made a direct shot to tell Nathanael. So, we learn that he was one who had a friend, who cared about his friend, and wanted him to know. He had the heart of an evangelist as well as a seeking heart. And by the way, he went to Nathanael because Nathanael apparently was his buddy, and he is always associated with Bartholomew. When the disciples went out two by two it's probably true that he went out with Bartholomew. On every list he's always next to Bartholomew, or Nathanael.

Now, let's look at chapter 6 and see the next passage about him. And I think this really cracks open Philip. Now, he had a good side, and his good side was he sought God, and he sought the Messiah. And his good side was that he had the heart of one who was an evangelist. But now we're going to find out the stuff about him that sort of unqualifies him. Jesus has already made wine at the marriage feast at Cana so He has demonstrated His supernatural power. That for sure has happened, and there may have been other miracles and mighty deeds that he had seen. But we come to chapter 6 and a big crowd has gathered at the north end of the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus has been teaching them all day and healing them all day of all their diseases. And it's been a tremendous day but it's coming to the evening now and the crowd is hungry and there were 5,000 men, which means there were probably at least 5,000 women and 20,000 kids. So, it's a big crowd. And they're all there and

you go to chapter 6 verse 5: "When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, saw a great company come to Him, He said to Philip," and here we meet Philip again. "Where shall we buy bread that these may eat?" Philip, how are we going to get bread? Why did He single Philip out? You know what I believe? I believe Philip was in charge of the food. Somebody had to be in charge of the food. We know Judas was in charge of the what? The money. And somebody had to be in charge of the food. Figure out how much they needed and how to get it and buy it and have it, because they had to eat as they travelled around and ministered. And it seems to me that that was Philip's area and so the Lord says to him, "Now Philip, how are we going to get the bread to feed these folks?"

Hmmm, why did He ask him that? Verse 6, "He said this to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do." He knew He was going to feed them miraculously and create in His own hand bread and fish but He was testing Philip. Now Philip, you've seen Me make wine at the marriage supper, now we don't have any food for this multitude, how are we going to get some food? You know what he said? Verse 7: "Philip answered Him, 'Two hundred denariis' worth of bread is not sufficient for them that every one of them may take a little.'" He gives Him an instant answer which, you know what that proves? That's another thing that proves to me that he was in charge of the food: he had already analyzed it. He had it figured out. He calculated that they could pull an offering out of that bunch of about 200 pennyworth, or else that's how much they had in the kitty. And by the way, one of those denarii or one of those pennies is one day's wages. So, they could get about 200 days' wages out, and let's assume that they bought barley biscuits. You could get 36 barley biscuits for one denarii and each biscuit was the size of your hand and an inch and a half thick. It's like a big French roll, kind of. And he had calculated the whole deal. Let's see, if we got 200 of those times 36 and everybody took, let's see, a bite around the edge, and then the next group, the next, listen, I've got it figured out, it can't be done. It cannot be done.

You know what you learn about Philip? It never entered into his mind that the Lord was supernatural. It utterly eluded him that Christ could do a creative miracle. The supernatural resources of Jesus Christ totally escaped his thinking. He just calculated the whole deal. You know what he is? He is analytical. He is pragmatic. I'm sure he would sit in a board meeting today with one of those little things, and just punch it. Can't do it. We don't have the money. It cannot be done. He had too much arithmetic to be adventurous. He was so stuck on facts and figures he missed faith all together.

One writer said, "The supreme essential of a great leader is a sense of the possible." Philip had a sense of the impossible. He didn't know that God said: "That with Him all things are," what? "Possible." Christ was trying to teach him about faith and he was such a thick-headed character that he wasn't learning the lesson. You know what he should have said? "Lord, You made wine at Cana. You fed Your children in the wilderness with manna. Do what You want. You've got this crowd here, You feed them." And you know something? He had been healing all day long. All day long Philip had watched demonstration of supernatural power. The Lord had overcome all diseases possible in that multitude, and Philip says it can't be done. Boy, that is thick-headedness.

And he lost his opportunity and the little boy that came along got an opportunity. Philip was a materialist. He was a man of practical common sense. He had measurements. He was methodical, mechanical; he had very little understanding of the supernatural. He was a facts and figures guy, always going by what appeared on the human level.

Now, let's see if he has any improvement in six chapters. Go to chapter 12 verse 20: "There were certain Greeks who had come down to Jerusalem for the feast." They were God-fearing Greeks, come for the Passover, and they had come because they had been devotees of Judaism, and they heard about Christ. "And they came to Philip," because he was the Greek connection, he had a Greek name probably that's the reason they came to him. "And they desired him saying, 'Sir, we would see Jesus.'" Well, Philip may have been approachable, he may have been a warm-hearted fellow, but he didn't take them to Jesus. He said, in effect, "Now, you guys wait here, I don't know if this is kosher, I don't know if this can happen. I've got to go check." So, he goes and tells Andrew. And together they go to Jesus. You know what we learn about Philip? He was not decisive. He was not forceful. Peter would have grabbed those Gentiles and dragged them into the presence of Jesus and said, "Lord, look at these guys, they want to see you." But not Philip. Philip had to check it out, check it out with somebody else. Well, what was bothering him? He was still living in chapter 10 of Matthew, at the way at the beginning when the Lord had said, "I am come but for the lost sheep of the house of," what? "Of Israel." So, he's saying, "These are Gentiles. You know, it's not in the minutes to bring the Gentiles. I don't think the constitution allows it. The bylaws, you know. The Lord said He has not come for the lost but for the lost sheep." You see, he had no sense of the bigger vision. He didn't get the message of grace. Yes, He came as the Messiah to Israel, but He had also said clear back in chapter 6: "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise," what? "Cast out." I mean, he never got the spirit of the thing. He's still going by the code, you know. He's still analyzing everything, still going by the book. He's a literalist. Got this little dinky focus. There's no precedent for this, it's not in the code. Boy, he missed the whole vision of grace, didn't he? I mean, he said we've found the Messiah but beyond that he didn't really have a clue of what was going on.

Well, finally we see him in chapter 14 and it isn't better; it's worse, if you can believe this. Three years later, verse 8, Philip says to Jesus, here they are the night before His, this is the Passover, this is the communion, you know, this is the time He's unfolding His heart to His disciples. He's going to be arrested, and crucified, and so forth right after this. It's all coming to an end, and Philip says to Him, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be sufficient." Jesus said to him, "How long do I have to be with you before you know Me, Philip?" Boy, this guy is really a klutz. I mean, his spiritual vision is nil. Everything is superficial with him. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." And how can you possibly be saying three years later, "Show us the Father." "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me." Don't you believe that, Philip? "And the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself but the Father that dwells in Me, He doeth the works. Believe Me, I am in the Father and the Father in Me or else believe Me for the very works' sake." I mean, My words and My works,

haven't they told you something, Philip? Oh, what puny faith, what a dull character. Show us the Father. He is the leader of the ignorant and slow of heart. Three years Philip gazed into the only face of God men ever saw, and he still didn't know who it was. He's not Phi Beta Kappa.

Isn't it wonderful that the Lord uses those kind of people? Aren't you thrilled? I am. He is no genius. He didn't get lesson one: Jesus is God. Three years he didn't get it. He needs to be in remedial class. Basic has eluded him. He is so skeptical, so unconvinced. Here is a man of limited ability, here is a man of inadequate faith, here is a man of imperfect understanding, here is a man who fools around with numbers instead of meditating, here is a man who is stuck on the level of rules and codes and stuff instead of seeing God. And someday he's going to reign over the tribes of Israel in the regeneration, and is going to inherit gloriously in the Kingdom, beyond what he would ever have dreamed. A pessimistic, reluctant, insecure, unsure, analytical, skeptical man saw facts and figures and missed the big picture of power and grace. His faith was limited by money, circumstances and proof.

You know what tradition tells us about this dear fellow? He got his act together, and he wound up dying as a martyr for a Christ he wouldn't deny. And he said he only had one request, and that is that when he was dead they not wrap his body in linen like his Lord because he wasn't worthy of that. Aren't you glad God uses the slow, and the faithless, and the analytical skeptics? Because some of us find ourselves there, don't we?

One more fellow for this morning, and he's only introduced to us in one passage and then we just lose him the rest of the time. His name is Bartholomew in Matthew 10, Bartholomew, but that was his last name. His first name was Nathanael. Bartholomew, by the way, means *bartholomaios*, son of Tolmai. Nathanael, son of Tolmai, two names, his first and his last. Nathanael means gift of God, son of Tolmai. And he was so different than his friend Philip. He was full of faith, and he was so contemplative, and so meditative, and so in awe of the supernatural. And he perceived everything as clear as crystal from the very beginning.

By the way, among the Hebrews there was a sect known as the Tolmaians who gave great attention to the Scripture and it may well be that Nathanael was somehow connected to them, though that may be a remote possibility.

He came from Cana of Galilee, again from a little village in Galilee. He was brought to Jesus by Philip, so he was acquainted with the rest of the gang. And only one passage in the Bible tells us about him and it's John 1. Let's go back. Verse 43. I think you're going to find him fascinating. It says in verse 43 that "Jesus went forth to Galilee and found Philip and told Philip to follow Him." And verse 45 then says: "Philip finds Nathanael, or Bartholomew, and said to him, 'We have found Him, of whom Moses and the law and the prophets did write, and His name is Jesus of Nazareth and He is bar Joseph, the son of Joseph.'" Now, what does this tell us? Well, it implies that Nathanael was a

searcher of Scripture and a seeker after divine truth. It tells us that Nathanael would have known Messianic prophecy and studied it because the way that Philip approaches him is, "Here's the One the Scripture told us about." The implication being that Nathanael was a student of Scripture. A further implication, I believe, being that Philip and Nathanael had probably spent hours and hours and hours studying together the Old Testament as they together were looking for the Messiah. We found Him, the One that Moses wrote about.

So, the first thing we learn about Nathanael is that he was a studier of the Scripture, a searcher for truth, a seeker for God. And that's the good part about him, like it was about Philip. He wanted to know God's truth. He hungered to know God's truth. He looked for the Messiah. But verse 46 tells us he had a sin too. He had a weakness. "Nathanael said to Philip, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?'" You've got to be kidding. Now, he didn't live in anyplace that was that hot, frankly, Cana. I mean, that is a dinky place. But they had a little class in Cana. Nazareth was a, was a despise, Nazareth was unrefined, you know, no class, rowdy place, wild place, uneducated. It was the last stop before the Gentile world, you know? I mean, it was out on the fringe. I mean, nothing ever came out of Nazareth but trouble.

Well, I don't know whether they had competition between the towns or not, but some kind of thing had built up in Nathanael's heart and he showed an ugly sin and that sin is the sin of prejudice. He shows prejudice toward a town. You know what prejudice is? It is an uncalled for generalization based on feelings of superiority. It's an uncalled for generalization based on feelings of superiority. He just blanketed the whole town of Nazareth and said nothing good's ever going to come out of there. Prejudice is ugly.

I don't know if you've had the opportunity to read "The Holy War" by John Bunyan. I know you're probably familiar with "Pilgrim's Progress," but "The Holy War" is an equally masterful allegory. And in "The Holy War," Mansoul is a town. And Emmanuel and his forces are attacking this town. Christ is coming wanting to invade this life. And as the town of Mansoul sits there, Emanuel's forces approach and Bunyan says: "Emmanuel's forces first attack Ear-gate. But Diabolus, who is Satan, sets up a guard at Ear-gate and his guard is," says Bunyan, "Old Mister Prejudice, an angry and ill-conditioned fellow who has under his power 60 deaf men." Prejudice has stopped a lot of folks from hearing the truth, hasn't it? Do you know what it was that prevented the scribes and Pharisees from responding to Jesus Christ? It was prejudice. He was not from Jerusalem. He was not trained in their schools. And even in Acts they said of the apostles, "What do they know? They are ignorant and unlearned Galileans, hayseeds from the north who haven't been rightly educated." Liberals say that about us today. There are people in the world who think that Christianity is a racist religion. Prejudice is a device used often by Satan to blind people to the truth. It caused the Jewish nation to remain deaf to the appeal of their own Messiah.

So, Nathanael showed prejudice. You say, "Boy, if there's one thing you don't want among the 12 it's a guy with prejudice." He was a good fellow, thoughtful, biblical, looking for the Messiah, quiet, meditative guy, full of prejudice. Well, Philip offered him a solution at the end of verse 46, he says, "Come and see. Now, we're going to find out how deep his prejudice is." If he's really, really prejudice he's going to say, "Not on your life. I wouldn't go near." But if he's got the kind of prejudice that can be overcome he's going to respond, and he did respond. Verse 47, he went and: "Jesus saw Nathanael coming and He said of him," here he is, and he's walking up ready to see this supposed Messiah from Nazareth and up walks the Lord and says, "Behold, an Israelite for real, in whom there is no hypocrisy."

Boy, what an introduction. Talking about me? Me? What is the Lord saying? What is an Israelite indeed? I mean, you're either a Jew or you're not. Right? The word indeed is *alths*, a true Jew, a true Israelite. You mean you could be a Jew and not a true Jew? That's right. You mean you could be an Israelite and not a true Israelite? That's right. An Israelite and not a genuine Israelite? That's right. "Because circumcision is not that of the flesh but that of the heart." Not all Israel is Israel, Romans 9:6 says. There are Jews in the flesh who are not Jews in the covenant because they do not believe. Right? Here was a true Jew, a God-fearing, God-seeking Messiah oriented Jew, true Jew. And He said, "In him there is no deceit, there's no guile." He is an honest, sincere Jew who seeks God. What a commendation, what a commendation.

But even someone as good as that, and He said there's no deceit in him. Jesus said that. There's no guile in him. There's nothing phony about him. But even a man that good was still stained with the sin of prejudice. So, you see, the Lord is always working with the unqualified at some point or another, even the best of them. His heart was right. His commitment was to the truth of God. He didn't have any deceit or hypocrisy in his life. And the Lord just told him that. What a wonderful, lovely introduction. Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if the Lord walked up to you and said, "Ah, a true Christian who is without hypocrisy?" Boy, you'd say, "Thank You. Wonderful of You to say that." I mean, he must have been a terrific guy. And to show you how really sincere he was, he said unto Him, verse 48: "How do You know me?" How do You know this? How do You know my heart? And He knew he was a true Jew. And He knew he was a God-seeker. And He knew he was sincere. How do You know that? You just walk up and You know that. How do You know that? Jesus answered him, "Oh, before Philip ever went to get you I saw you under the fig tree." Oh, that blew his mind. How do You know I was under a fig tree? That's where he was.

You say, "What's he doing under a fig tree? Did people get under fig trees? What do you do under a fig tree?" Basically in Palestine, fig trees were planted around houses as well as places where they would be harvested as a crop. And a fig tree would grow to a height of 15 feet and spread its branches out about 25 feet from the middle, as far as 25 feet. It would be like a very great shade area, and it's very hot there, you know. And in many of the poorer homes, there was only one room and there was little breeze very often, and so you could go out under the fig tree and you could find

shade and comfort and coolness. But beyond that, a fig tree became the only place you could go to get away from the house, and the hustle and bustle of what was going on inside. And so, it became a place of retreat. It became a place of respite. It became a place to be alone. It became a place of prayer, and a place of meditation, and a place of contemplation, a place of communing with God, a place of searching the Scripture, a place of quietness. And it may well be that Nathanael was out under the fig tree, as so many Jews did, and he was meditating and he was praying, in the quietness and the solitude, away from the activity of the house. He was seeking God in the privacy of the shade of the fig tree.

And Jesus is saying to him: I saw you. I saw you meditating, I saw you seeking, I saw your open heart. I saw you in the secret place, the private place. I saw your true desire. I saw what was there and what you wanted to know, and I'm here. Pretty exciting.

Well, here was Nathanael very possibly praying under the fig tree, "Lord, show me Your Messiah." And here comes Philip shooting under the branches saying, "Nathanael, I found Him, your prayer is answered." He's from Nazareth. And then, Nathanael says, "Ah, you've got to be kidding." I mean, even he knew that it said in the prophets, Micah, "He shall come forth out of thee Bethlehem." And nothing good ever comes out of Nazareth. Come and see, come and see. Okay. His desire overwhelmed his prejudice and off he went. Well, that's enough for him. Nathanael verse 49: "Answered and said to Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel."

You want to know something? Three years later Philip wasn't sure about that, whether He was God. Nathanael knew it immediately. He saw deity in His presence. Philip's concept was that the one who Moses spoke about is come but he wasn't too sure who He was. But Nathanael knew instantly: this is the Son of God. Oh, what commitment. Oh, what a heart.

And Jesus said this to him: "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, thou believest." It shouldn't be a question, it's a statement. The reason you believe is because of My omniscience. You were convinced that only God can know everything. My omniscience convinced you who I was. He says, "Listen, you're going to see greater things than that, my friend. You have only just begun to see." He was knocked over by one little act of omniscience. Jesus saw him under a fig tree. And Jesus says, "You haven't seen anything yet." And look at verse 51. I don't have time to go into this; you can buy the tape on John 1. It's all there. But just quickly, "He said unto him, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, from here on you're going to see heaven open and you're going to see angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'"

What is this? In specific, He's saying this: Nathanael, You think you saw heaven, you think you saw divine power in that omniscience? From here on you're going to see stuff going on all the time between heaven and earth. You're going to see heaven open, and angels going up and down, and the Son of Man working in response to heavenly power. You're going to be exposed to heaven come

down, is what He's saying. And he was. Miracle, after miracle, after miracle. And it may well be that Nathanael understood the glory of Christ better than anybody else. He never asked another question. He never frames another query. He never even appears the rest of the time in the whole account. He was in, solid like a rock, at the start.

So, we meet Nathanael Bartholomew, the seeker of truth, prejudice but not bound by it, honest, open, a man of prayer, a man of meditation, a man who made a complete surrender to Christ, a man with a keen mind and a heart of faith. He saw. He understood. And Jesus promised to him the most wonderful revelations, and everything he saw from then on he knew was heaven open, heaven open. Philip was never sure what it was.

God uses slow, plodding, dull, thick, mechanical, analytical, weak faith skeptics like Philip. And God uses great faith, clear understanding, meditative souls like Nathanael. You know what He does? He takes the raw material and He transforms it into what He can use.

I wish I could tell you the story between Philip's training and his death. I bet it would be glorious, 'cause the Lord made him what He wanted him to be. The Lord can use any raw material that's available, and He's in the business of making the most out of the unqualified. Can I ask you this in closing? Do you qualify among the unqualified? Because if you do the Lord wants to use you. Let's pray.

Lord, again we thank You for the fact that this is such a heartening word to us, that You can use us in spite of ourselves. Not as we are, so much, but as You will make us, and mold us, and shape us. May we be willing to start out as learners, *maths*, disciples, to become apostles, trained to be sent for Your glory. In Christ's name, amen.

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