

The Next Day

Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18

John 1:43-51

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Rev. Donna Vuilleumier

Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you.

John 1:43-51

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

In this season of Epiphany as we see the light and glory of Jesus Christ revealed to those around him, we also see him revealed to us in new ways. We see Jesus as he was revealed to the Magi, the Gentile wise men. We see Jesus revealed to John the Baptist and the crowds when he comes up from the Jordan waters of baptism and the Holy Spirit descends upon God's Beloved Son. We see the power of his miraculous and astonishing wonders as he changes ordinary water into the finest wine. We see his first disciples curious, questioning and discovering who Jesus is.

Philip, once a disciple of John the Baptist, sought out Nathanael, excited and eager to share the good news with him. “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.” But these words, an epiphany to Philip, are not so for Nathanael who questions, as we can safely assume sarcastically, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” It will take the good One from Nazareth who had seen Nathanael under a fig tree—a tree so huge and dense with large overhanging branches it created a place of prayer and solitude, a place to study the Torah. Jesus, this new itinerant teacher from the backwater nowhere of Nazareth, opens an epiphany for Nathanael in that seemingly small revelation. Yet Nathanael—who will become the disciple we know as Bartholomew—will joyfully reply, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

In our own lives we too experience epiphanies—the lower case ‘e’ epiphanies that reveal amazing things to us for our own lives. Sometimes they are obvious to others, sometimes they are far more subtle and personal—meaning little to others yet meaning everything to us. These sudden flashes of insight, perception, understanding and awareness signify a turning point, a transformation for us. It shines the light on what God has known about since we were quietly being knit together, intricately woven, in our mother’s womb as we were fearfully and wonderfully made.

Just as Nathanael had a radical, sudden change in his life as he recognized the epiphany connection to Jesus in his life, so too did Martin Luther King, Jr. He described this divine inspiration in his memoir about the 381 day Montgomery bus boycott, *Stride Toward Freedom*.ⁱ

The words I spoke to God that midnight are still vivid in my memory. “I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I’ve come to the point where I can’t face it alone. At that moment, I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced God before. It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice saying: “Stand up for justice, stand up for truth; and God will be at your side forever.” Almost at once my fears began to go. My uncertainty disappeared. I was ready to face anything.”

He was ready to come and see for himself. He was ready for the next day. Martin Luther King, Jr. was dramatically changed by this epiphany often referred to as his “vision in the kitchen.” One day he was uncertain and hesitant about his abilities to lead what Rosa Parks had started. The next day his epiphany of God’s quiet assurance empowering him to, “Stand up for justice, stand up for truth” with God at his side forever, began the slow, hard, dangerous, demanding work that eventually not only had the segregation laws on buses declared unconstitutional, it also catapulted him into such a powerful and dynamic civil rights leader.

Whether Jesus is revealed to you in the good news of a friend, in a time of skepticism, or in a subtle personal insight, or over a cup of coffee in your darkest hour, or when your aspirations are responded to with the searing question, “what good can come out of Hillsboro?,” Jesus invites you, invites us, to come and see, to be ready for the next day come what may..... Amen.

ⁱ Martin Luther King Jr, *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*, 1st edition (Harper & Brothers, 1958), 124–125.