



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
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JOHN 1:14-51

John Series

Turn with me to John 1. We read through the first thirteen verses last week, we talked about them, but we're going to pick it up in verse 14 today as we move forward and we're understanding some very important things.

I think we have a real challenge in our world today. Here's the challenge (and maybe this even happens in your mind sometimes) – that we stop thinking of God as a person and we start thinking of Him as an idea. There's a lot of people in our world today who say, "Oh I believe in God," but when they start describing God they describe Him as a force or they describe Him as a compilation of all the good in the world or that there's lots of ways. It's like a polytheistic way of understanding God. John in his book is trying to communicate a very important message to us and that message is that God is a person. He's a personal God, He cares about us, and He's revealed through Jesus Christ and Jesus makes it personal.

We are going to experience that today as we are looking at John 1. We're going to see that. I hope that it will remind you again, God is personal. He wants to have a personal relationship with you. He's not just an idea, He's someone who wants to get to know you and live inside of you.

A classic verse that we use continually in our theology is John 1:14 so I want to start there today. So if we start studying the theology of Christ, we come to this verse because it explains the deity and humanity of God. In John 1:14 it says, *The Word (that's Jesus) became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

This idea of being packed *full of grace and truth* is going to be significant because He is the word, the vehicle, the communication point between the Father whom we can't see and us who long for the Father. So how are going to get to know Him? We're going to get to know Him through Jesus who's packed full of these concepts, grace and truth. I want to talk about both of those. As we continue on we'll see them developed in the passage. I want you to catch those. Packed full of *grace and truth*.

Verse 15: (*John - this is John the Baptist - testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'"*)

John's attitude about life was that Christ is supreme. It wasn't just me and God, look at us both; it's all about God. There's something bigger than me here. I like that because I think that's the same message we want to have with other people no matter what we're doing with them. There's something bigger going on here than just you and me. There's something bigger here. I want you to know God is at work. He's a personal God, cares about the individuals here, He's at work in what's going on. That was John's attitude about life. He was drawing attention to Jesus.

He goes on to explain the words we've already talked about. Look at verse 16 as John is developing some theology in simple terms for us so we can get it. Verse 16 says, *Out of his fullness – fullness is the fullness he talked about back in verse 14, full of grace and truth. Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

So if we go back to verse 16, it says out of His fullness we have already received grace in place of the grace we've already received. So what is he talking about here? Well he describes that in verse 17 so we get an understanding of what he means. He says in verse 17, *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

When we talk about God to children, we talk about God. We use the word 'God' as we're talking to them. But really when we tell Bible stories and we try to amplify this idea for young children, we emphasize more about Jesus because Jesus has skin on. If you tried to paint a picture of God it would be very difficult, but if you paint a picture of Jesus, you can do that. So we have lots of art, lots of pictures of Jesus because He has skin on and it gives us the ability to understand God better.

When we come to this passage, we see he says *grace upon grace*. We understood in the Old Testament this idea about the law, that God gave the law to the people and they really needed it, they wanted it because it was a covenant. It was a covenant between God and them and they got a picture of who God is, they got to know His faithfulness. They got to know the standard that God has provided. They got to know Him in that personal way. But they didn't want to get too close to Him.

Let me explain that. After the Ten Commandments were given in Exodus 20, after commandment number ten is done, this is what we read in verse 18 and 19: *When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."*

They got a picture of God, God Almighty, the covenant God who has this power and awesomeness and we just heard His standard of holiness. "I can't get too close to God," is what people were saying. Wow. They have this picture of God and an important picture of God (I think what we need in our lives) that God is holy, that God is powerful, that God is awesome. So when the mountain shook and the lightning came and the commandments were given to Moses, they were scared to death because they got to see God.

We need that. God's not just a buddy we keep in the back pocket here or a badge we wear. He is God Almighty. It's just amazing. We think about the greatness of God. We sing about that in *How Great is Our God*. When we sing those words 'how great is our God' it should resonate with us like those people in the Old Testament who heard God or saw the commands come to Moses and they are just like, "Wow. Awesome." That was grace.

Grace refers to this term, the term of all the good things that come to us as a result of what God wants to do in our lives. It's a theological term. It means that God gives us things we don't deserve. So in the Old Testament what we see is that God is giving this grace to them in terms of the law.

But notice in verse 16 it says, *for out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given*. Now we have Jesus Christ. Now we get to know God even better. We get to know more about Him. We get to know more about who He is, what He does.

It's powerful. When we understand more about God and we understand who He is, what He wants to do, we get this grace in place of grace. What was given under the Law was good, it was a good thing, but it wasn't a complete understanding of who God is.

Jeremiah tells us in the new covenant that in the old covenant (that is, the one with Moses) that God wrote the law on tablets of stone. But now there will come a time, Jeremiah says (and that is with Jesus), that He's going to write the commandments on our hearts. It's a different way of relating to us. It's a new way of thinking for many people. This grace is what brings it all together for us.

So he's saying Jesus is full of grace and truth. These two things that He is full of and we then get to experience them. It's Jesus who brings them into the world, into our life, and we get to experience that grace.

I hope you experience that in your life. It's the special grace of salvation that he's talking about here, that specific grace that He gives to believers in order for them to trust Him, to rely on Him, to understand God in a particular way. It's big. Our God is great.

Grace is one of the terms. The other term there is the word 'truth.' The word 'truth,' Jesus is truth, the idea is He is the ultimate standard in life. If I asked you today (I won't ask you to do this), "Raise your hand if you believe that God is truth," most of you, I would suggest, would raise your hands. But the problem comes during the week when we have some challenges that we're faced with.

There are a lot of people who believe that Jesus is a truth, not the truth. He's a truth. He's just one of many ways to get to God. But what Jesus is doing is providing a standard for us so we can understand the truth. Once we get that, it becomes very important. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life.*" He doesn't say, "I am one of the ways to get to the Father." He doesn't say, "I am one of the truths." He says, "*I am the truth.*" That means that God is exclusive.

You've got to get that because you may start thinking, "Well, my neighbor's so sincere in his worship of whatever. Whether he's worshiping his car or some other idol, he's really a sincere person. He's a good person." You've got to understand that God doesn't measure salvation based on sincerity. He measures it based on truth. And so we have to understand that Jesus is the truth. This idea of truth is going to be developed in the gospel of John for us, tied in a little bit more as we go through.

John 17:17 is the prayer that Jesus is making for us and in that prayer Jesus prays, "Lord, *sanctify them by the truth.*" I need that prayer. Sanctify means purify us, cleanse us, grow us. I need that in my life. I need the truth because I tend to lie to myself sometimes and those lies get in the way. I need to know the truth and I need to allow God to speak to me. And so Jesus is praying, "*Sanctify them by the truth.*"

John 8:32 says, *Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.* When we do understand that truth, God's standard, there's a tremendous freedom that comes into us.

John 16:13 says, *But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.* This is John speaking through his gospel about truth. In other words, truth isn't just about salvation, it's ongoing. We all need this guidance through our lives because the heart, our human heart, tends to lie to us and say things that aren't truth. We need to understand that. John is going to embellish these ideas all throughout his book.

The point he's trying to make right here in John 1 is that Christ is *the* one. He is *the* one for us. He's the one that comes from the Father and He makes the Father known so that we can understand Him. He is full of grace and truth.

The idea is that we can understand more about what it means to know God personally. He's not just an idea, He's a person. How great is our God. It's powerful.

Let's go on to verse 19. Let me remind you that this is John the Baptist. Not the gospel writer John, but John the Baptist. *Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah."* Don't be confused here. I am not the Messiah.

They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"

He said, "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?"

He answered, "No." So all the answers so far are no.

Verse 22: *Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"* They're saying, "Come on. Help us out a bit here. The leaders of Jerusalem have sent us down here to the Jordan River to find out who you are because we're hearing about all these people coming out to you. You're baptizing people and all kinds of things are happening, you're having these crusades out here. Who are you? Why are people coming here? Are you the Messiah? Are you Elijah? Are you the prophet?"

He says no to all of those things. There's something that's important that John wants them to understand. Notice what he says because I think this is the message we want to say to people as we come into contact with them about spirituality, about God.

In verse 23 it says *John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"*

"I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." There is something bigger going on here. My God is great. We start thinking about the greatness of God and we want to tell people about it. There's something bigger going on here in this moment than me just talking to you. God is at work and maybe it's in this moment that God has brought us together so that I can share with you more about who God is. God is big.

Notice verse 28: *This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.* So notice we're down by the Jordan River, not at the Bethany that's real close to Jerusalem. He's giving an identification of this place. It may be called something else. The point is, it's down there by the Jordan River. Big things were happening, the religious leaders send this official delegation out there to find out who is this guy, who is this man Jesus, and John is going to tell us who He is.

You just want to ask yourself the question, how do you find out about God and who He is? Where do you learn about God? Because if you're learning about God from the culture then we find something that's disconcerting I think. Because discussions about God in our culture, even in the Christian culture, seem to have a mix of morality, patriotism, and God put together. I would suggest that when we get to the pure form of God and understand who He is, major things happen in our lives. How do you find out about God?

If you're finding out about God from Satan then you're going to get a confused perspective because Satan has a confused perspective of God. Satan's perspective of God – just imagine Satan looking at God and describing Him. Satan would say some things like this: "God is very restrictive. God is out to get you." Because that's his experience, you see. That's his experience. So if you listen to Satan you're going to get a skewed view of who God is.

If you want to know what God thinks about the hungry people in the world, where are you going to go? You're going to go to the gospel of John or the other gospels and you're going to see Jesus who communicates the Father and the heart the Father has as Jesus feeds the hungry people. Jesus cares for their needs. We're getting a picture of who God is by looking at Jesus.

What does God think about disease in our world? You want to know the answer to that, you look at Jesus and how Jesus came and sometimes healed one person among the whole group, other times, the Bible says, He healed all that came to Him. Jesus healed people. He cared about their physical needs.

What does God think about women? We look at Jesus and how Jesus went out of His way, counterculture, spent time talking to the Samaritan women, spent time rescuing, really, the woman caught in adultery. The man wasn't brought; she was caught in adultery. That must have meant the man was there too, but they didn't bring the man. So they were just going to kill the woman. Jesus protects her in the midst of that situation.

What does God think about kids? If you want to know what God thinks about kids then we go to Jesus and we watch how Jesus related to children and how He welcomed them and valued them. He used them as examples to teach others about faith.

You want to know what God thinks of sin and salvation, about sinners, needy people, searching people. Then we look at Jesus and see how He handled those things. That's what we're going to see as we continue on watching Jesus in action in this book.

We're going to see Jesus cares about people and He's a personal God. Very personal. He's not just an idea. God is personal and Jesus wants to have that personal relationship with these people.

So verse 29: *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* People all around us need Jesus. What God is looking for is people who are willing to point the way. "I've got to tell you! Let me tell you about Jesus! He is the one who takes away the sin of the world!" God is great.

This particular verse answers the ancient question that needed to be answered theologically in the Bible. What is the Lamb? The question started back there in the first family when Cain and Abel brought sacrifices to God and Cain's sacrifice wasn't accepted. It was vegetables. He was a farmer. Abel's sacrifice was accepted. He was a shepherd. God accepted Abel's sacrifice but not Cain's. Why the lamb? We're not told there why, but right away we're told a lamb was the acceptable sacrifice.

In the story of Abraham and Isaac, God decides to test Abraham after giving him a son. Does Abraham really love me more than his son? So He says, "I want you to sacrifice your son on Mount Moriah," and so Abraham's obedient to God, loves God, loves God more than this promise of this son he's been given. He's walking up the hill with his son and his son says to him, "Dad, we have the fire here. We have the wood for the offering, but we don't have the sacrifice. Did you forget something? Dad, where's the sacrifice?" And Dad says this to him, "Son, the Lord will provide." And surely the Lord did. When they got up there God provided an alternative sacrifice to Isaac, he provided a lamb or a ram that was caught in the thickets. Why? Why the lamb? We aren't told.

You get to the Leviticus and in the book of Leviticus you have all these sacrifices being offered. One of these sacrifices is the lamb and that lamb without blemish is offered for sacrifice for sins. We aren't told why a lamb.

But now we come to this passage right here and this is a historical moment when John points out and says, "He is the *Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" That is what we've been waiting for all these years. This is the fulfillment of the promise. This answers the question

that we've been asking all these years, why a lamb, because He is the one. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

How great is our God? How big is our God? We try to see the things that are being developed here in this passage.

Verse 30. John continues. *"This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' He's bigger, He's greater than I am. I just want you to know something bigger is happening here, John is saying to them.*

I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." In other words, John is saying, "I don't know him." Now John the Baptist was related to Jesus early on so they probably saw each other growing up, but he didn't know Him in this way of His ministry.

Verse 32: *Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."*

John is saying, "I didn't know him. I was just doing my job." It sounds like what we would say sometimes. "I'm just doing my job. I'm just telling people about Jesus." It's God's job to convert people, not your job. Our job is to just tell people about Jesus and let them know about the message of who God is. And so that's what he's doing. We're just the servants. John's saying, "I'm just a normal guy obeying God." And when we're just the normal guy obeying God, telling people about Jesus, God does amazing things through us.

Let's go on. Verse 35: *The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.* We're going to learn that these two disciples (they're not mentioned here, but we're told later who they are) are Andrew, the brother of Peter, and John, the author of the book, who is the brother of James. Those are the two people who are there.

So verse 35: *The next day John (John the Baptist) was sitting there again with two of his disciples (Andrew and John). When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"*

I like that. There's something going on in this story because these guys are attracted to John the Baptist. Andrew and John, the author of the book we're reading, were attracted to John the Baptist. Attracted to his ministry, attracted to commitment to God, attracted to repentance, baptism. I don't know what it is they were attracted to, but they were spiritually sensitive. But they didn't have the full understanding yet of what God had for them.

You probably know people like that. They're spiritually sensitive. We know that because they're going to the Catholic church, not as part of faith but just as trying to do the righteous thing. They're going there or they're praying the rosary. They're spiritually sensitive. They're spiritually sensitive because they're involved maybe in a cult or some Eastern religion. They're spiritual. They wouldn't say they're godly, but they would say they're spiritual. They're moving

in a direction because they're spiritually sensitive, just like these guys are attracted to John. They just don't have the full story.

So when John points out there's the Lamb of God then these guys become interested. Notice what happens in verse 37. *When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.*

You see, you take people who are spiritually sensitive and following along in some spiritual thing and you're going, "Oh no. They're in trouble." No, what you want to think is, "Oh great! They're spiritually sensitive! They just don't know the truth." That's our job is to introduce them to the truth.

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Verse 38: Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" What a great question!

Jesus never asks questions because He doesn't know the answer. He asks questions because the people need to ask the questions themselves or answer them. Jesus knows what they want. He asks them, "What do you want?" In the King James Version it says, "What do you seek?" I think it's a good question we all need to ask ourselves. What do we want in life?

They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" They ask this question that's really not on the mark. What they really want to know is, are you really the Messiah? Who are you? I want to know what spiritual life is all about. That's what they really want to know. But they don't know how to ask the question yet.

Sometimes a person who's spiritually sensitive will say, "What do you believe about abortion? What do you believe about the creation? Do you think that happened in seven days that are literal days? What do you think about evolution?" People will ask those kinds of questions because they don't know the right questions to ask. I would suggest don't get stuck in those questions. Those are good questions, but the peripheral, the most important question, is let's talk about your relationship with God and who He is for you.

They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher), "where are you staying?" Notice Jesus' response. He doesn't just say, "I'm staying at the Ramada just down the road." What he says is, "Come, and you will see." That's the same message we want to be sharing with other people. Do you want to come? Come and experience God's power. Watch God work in your life. Come and see.

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. Wow. They spent a day with Jesus? Just those two guys? I wonder what they did. To spend an afternoon with Jesus would be just amazing. I'm sure they asked questions like, "Hey, Jesus. Can you tell me why does John say he must decrease but you must increase. What does that mean actually?" or "When he says you're the Lamb of God, could you explain that a little bit? I'm not quite sure I'm getting that." An afternoon with Jesus was so valuable and it changed these guys.

They had no idea who Jesus was at first and Jesus invested in their lives just like He is invested in our lives. These guys needed time with Jesus and their lives would be radically changed.

They're going to watch Jesus raise people from the dead. They're going to watch Him feed five thousand people with just five loaves and two fish. They're going to watch Him heal people. It's going to be amazing. All those things are going to happen, but they needed an afternoon with Jesus just to get to know Him a little bit.

We're going to see that meeting changed Andrew. Notice in verse 40 – *Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.* So that's how we know one of the guys is named Andrew.

Verse 41: *The first thing Andrew did after he had his afternoon with Jesus, the first thing he did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.*

As we see Andrew in the Bible, he's the guy who brings people to Jesus. That's what characterizes Andrew. He's the kind of guy that can do that. He probably was one of those connectors. There are some people in life who are connectors. They're just connected to all kinds of people and when they speak other people say, "I'm interested in what that person's interested in." Andrew was that kind of person. He's a connector. And so he brings his brother to Jesus.

Remember in the story of the feeding of the five thousand that Jesus says, "Go find food." Phillip had a response we'll talk about in a moment, but Andrew, the Bible says, found the boy with the five loaves and the two fish and brought him to Jesus. Andrew is that kind of a guy. He brings people to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him (that is, Peter) and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter). Jesus is going to take a personal interest in this guy and He looks past what He sees to the potential that He has. God does that with you and me too. God looks past our pride, He looks past our sin, He looks past our weaknesses and He sees the potential in our lives. And so He says to him, "I'm going to change your name. I'm going to give you another name. Because I know what I'm going to do in your life."

It's a beautiful thing that we see. Peter is the guy who has all kinds of weaknesses. He's always talking when he shouldn't be talking. He's doing things he probably shouldn't be doing. But God sees past those things, into the heart, and He knows that this guy is going to be a great servant. God sees the cracks in our lives, but He knows where we're going and He sees past that to our potential.

Verse 43: *The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Phillip, he said to him, "Follow me."* Phillip, we'll see as we go through the passages here, is a deep thinker kind of a guy.

When we came to the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus said to Phillip, "Where are we going to get enough food to feed all these people?" You know Jesus knows the answer to the question already, but He asks the question of Phillip so Phillip can get started thinking about it. Here's the question for Phillip, "Where are we going to get enough food to feed all these people, Phillip?"

Trying to get Philip's wheels turning. Philip says it would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite.

Here's what Philip does. Jesus says to Philip, "Where are we going to get enough food to feed all these people?" Philip says, "Give me just a minute, Lord." Gets out his calculator. "Let's see, we've got five thousand people here, each one's going to take about that much food and, let's see, that food costs this amount of money, so...whoa!" he says, "That's half a year's wages!" Comes back to Jesus. "We've got a problem, Jesus. We don't have any money here."

So he's a deep thinker. He's the kind of guy who thinks about things more deeply. He's kind of the engineer, I think, of the disciples. He's a quiet guy, but he's thinking. When Jesus says later, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life,*" Philip says, "*Lord, show us the Father and it will be enough for us.*" He's this guy who really thinks deeply about things. So Jesus is going to relate to him and minister to him.

But it's interesting that Philip, do you see in the passage there, it says (verse 44), *Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*

Philip says he found Jesus. But if you go back up to verse 43 it says that Jesus found Philip. Now who found who here? I think sometimes we say, "I found Jesus." I think it's true we do find Jesus. But it starts with Jesus finding us. We've got to understand this. It's not a human thing we do, this salvation thing, where we say a few spiritual laws and instantly we're in the kingdom. God finds us. He's the one who calls us, He chooses us, He picks us out, He even gives us the grace to respond to Him. It's all on Jesus' initiative. So humanly speaking we can say, "Yes, I found Jesus. Let me tell you about Him." But we have to recognize the power of what God was doing.

Now Philip goes to Nathanael and he tells him, "We found him. We found the Messiah talked about in the Law – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Notice Nathanael's response in verse 46. "Trenton?" *Can any good thing come from there?* Well, he uses *Nazareth*, but sometimes we look at a particular town and we say, "I don't think so." That's what Nathanael says.

Notice Philip's learning from the Master already. What does he say? He doesn't say, "Well let me tell you about how valuable Nazareth is." He says, "*Come and see.*" The same message we want to say to people. We don't argue people into the kingdom. We just say, "Come and see. Come and see what God does. It is amazing because our God is awesome. Our great God that we serve, just come and see what He does."

Verse 47: *When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."* Here's a guy who has integrity and He's saying that of him. Here's a guy who is an *Israelite in whom there is no deceit*. He's a man of integrity. He is not like the Jacob in the Old Testament.

I sense that what's going on here is Nathanael was over there under this fig tree and pondering something. He's pondering maybe the story of Jacob. It appears that may be happening. This is all conjecture, but the story that follows seems to indicate Jesus knew something we don't know in the text here.

The reason I say that is this word 'deceit' here is the word used in the Septuagint, the Old Testament, for the word *jacob*. Jacob's name means tricker or deceiver or supplanter. So the word here is similar to that. He's not saying of Nathanael he's sinless, in fact He's saying this guy has integrity, he doesn't have deceit in him.

Verse 48: *"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.
Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."*

We don't know what happened here, but I sense that what's going on here is Nathanael's under this fig tree and he's just thinking about the story of Jacob and how God renewed the covenant with him. I don't know if you know the story, but Jacob had to run for his life because he lied to his father. He had to run for his life, he's on his way to his Uncle Laban's house, and it's nighttime so he has to lay down. He lays down and he uses a rock for a pillow. He lies down there and he has a dream. We call this Jacob's Ladder. What it is is he has this dream and he sees the angels ascending and descending on the ladder and God in the midst of that renews the covenant with him. That's part of the story of Jacob and the renewing of the covenant.

We don't know the whole story here, but Jesus sees something going on in Nathanael and He says, *"I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."* Then Nathanael declared, *"Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."* What he's saying is that God has revealed something to him in the midst of this.

Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

Maybe he was under that tree thinking about Jacob. Jesus says, "You're a man who doesn't have any Jacob in him."

Nathan says, "How do you know that?"

"Well I saw you under the fig tree."

"Oh wow. You must be the Messiah."

Jesus says, "You think I'm the Messiah just because I tell you you're under the fig tree? You just wait. You're going to see the Jacob's Ladder. God is going to renew His covenant with you in the same way."

So kind of powerful idea, I'm not sure that's exactly what happened, but it seems that that may have been something that was going on. The point is that God is great and you're getting to know Him.

Notice Jesus ministers to Andrew and John by an afternoon of time with them. He ministers to Philip by just calling him over and he's on the way. He ministers to Nathanael in a different way.

God takes a personal interest in each person. He calls them. He calls them to Himself so they can understand Him. God is so great He knows every one of us and how this works.

I was pondering the calling of the disciples this week as I was fishing. If you follow me on Facebook you know I was fishing for a couple of days this week. This is my grandson, this is the first time he ever caught a fish. His brother caught fourteen fish while we were there. He hadn't caught any. His brother caught five that day and he hadn't caught any and he says to me, "This is a waste of time." That's what he says. Five minutes later he catches this bass and he caught his first fish and he was excited.

As I'm pondering the disciples, if you remember Jesus came by the Sea of Galilee while the guys were fishing. I can imagine the look on their faces being like this, that they're just delighted to catch fish. Jesus says to them, "I'm going to make you fishers of people. I'm going to change your occupation. You're going to have the same delight in telling other people about the Lord." Oh I love that.

I'm watching these guys catch fish because you know when you catch a fish it's not an easy thing to do. They would get very quick. The fish would nibble and they would just grab the – "Aw, he took my bait." You got to let them eat it first. Don't grab it right away when he starts nibbling. And then when he gets it maybe he'll come in and bring him in. They had so much fun catching fish this week.

Do you have fun catching people? You're talking to people, you're telling them about the Lord. We're not punching people with the Bible and saying, "You've got to accept Jesus or you're going to hell." No, we're telling them about the greatness of God. Who God is, how powerful God is, and what God wants to do in our lives. When we do that, great things happen in the lives of people. It's not our job to convert people, it's our job to share the message with them and God converts that. God is the one who draws them. We're just like the fishermen that God puts out there and we have the privilege of throwing it out there for them and allowing them to respond.

God is great and I think He wants us to get that picture of how great He is because when we get a picture of how great God is we realize that He is the only way. There's not a lot of ways to get to heaven, there is one. Jesus is the truth. He's full of grace and truth. Those are things that are now provided to us because we know Jesus. Our God is a great God.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Father, we here are your children and we're grateful to open your word again and allow you to speak to us and teach us. Lord, I pray that you take from this passage, from this message truths and stir the hearts of each person. I pray that you would give us each a message that we need, that we would be your ambassadors, your fishers of men. Thank you, in Jesus' name, amen.