

Response John 1:43-51 Epiphany 2 Jan 17, 2021

Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."  
Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" John 1  
48-49 Response

Dear friends in Christ, one of the most famous lines from star wars is, "May the force be with you." My dad loves the movie and is also a Lutheran pastor. One of his children gave him a shirt that said, you may be a Lutheran Jedi, if, when they say, "May the force be with you," you respond, "And also with you." I am sure there are a number of Lutheran Jedi here today. Sometimes we are so caught up in our response that we don't quite notice what we are responding to - the words, the response, just flows.

God comes to people in our text - to Philip, with a "Follow me", to Nathanael, seen under a fig tree. He also comes to Samuel repeatedly at night in our old testament reading. **And our tendency is to go right to the response.** Philip told Nathanael what and who they had found, Jesus. When Nathanael gives his tepid response disparaging Nazereth, Philip says, "Come and see." People have made whole evangelism programs based on that response. Nathanael cries out, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel." And we spend time practicing our praises. Samuel, prompted by Eli, says, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." A good response, one commended to our young repeatedly in Sunday school. But so often we spend so long on the response we forget what they are responding to.

In confirmation I teach the ten commandments - You shall have no other Gods - Remember the sabbath- You shall not steal. And I have the kids memorize the commandments and the meanings from Luther's Small Catechism. The beginnings of the meanings should be easy - all 10: We should fear and love God so that," with only minor variations. We almost skip over that part. We say it fast to get to the rest - the part that is harder, that tells us what to do or not do. But maybe I should give full credit for that part. IT tells us the God of the universe, who created it with His word, who is mighty in power and sustains all things, also sees and cares for me. He sees and cares, how I treat his name and my parents and my neighbors. And He invites me to see him acting still for them even in me. So yes, I fear and love him.

We spend whole paragraphs speaking of what God Father has done in the creed - his creating and sustaining and protecting -yet one sentence on our response - for all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey him. We spend whole paragraphs on the son - redeeming, purchasing me with His holy precious blood - and one phrase of response - that I may serve him, in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. Who God is and What he does and how he cares for me is a bigger deal than my response. God is and God acts and we can see Him acting. That always precedes our response.

Now we do practice our response. Samuel did - he needed Eli to instruct him. But more important than the response was recognizing God's word and action. We learn our response so we don't worry about it but can spend our time seeing God in his word. One thing I love about our liturgy is that, since I have it mostly memorized, I have time to see God and realize how good it is to praise the son of God, the king of Israel. It lets me focus on God, not speaking. To

my shame, I sometimes us that to think about other things, football games or plans, but God gives me this chance to see Him.

When we see God and recognize we see God, when we don't turn away, we see God more. I don't know how many people saw Jesus and to whom he said, "Follow me," But other places in the Gospels speak of nameless others who Jesus told to follow who turned back. They did not see God and His call. Those who saw God and followed kept seeing God, in his miracles and healings, in his teachings and parables, in his suffering and dying, and in his resurrection and life. They saw the God acting, until they even saw Him acting in them. Nathanael saw God seeing him, when Jesus said He saw Nathanael under the fig tree. Nathanael recognized God saw him with his response, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God!" And Jesus promised he would keep seeing God: "you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." Samuel heard and saw God when messages were rare, but Samuel kept listening and became a mighty prophet of God. He kept seeing God.

So we will ask, do you see God coming to you today ?He comes to you in his word, the very son of God, the king of Israel comes to you in His word. He knows you and saw you when you were washed in the waters of baptism, in the name of the father and the son and the Holy spirit. He feeds you not with figs but with Christ's very body and blood. You will have a response - thank and praise, serve and obey. But first see God, coming for and caring for you And then keep seeing him for you will see greater things than these, as you learn to see God. God calls and says follow. God keeps revealing Himself to you. See him. Amen.