

Saturday, February 21, 2015

Written by the Rev. Dr. James E. Davison, former director of continuing education, and brought to you by the Continuing Education Office at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Scripture

John 1:43-51

43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 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." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47 When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." 49 Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." 51 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."

Devotional

Throughout Lent, as we travel the road toward the cross, we focus on our shortcomings, faults, and weaknesses. We seek to humble ourselves before the eternal, holy, righteous God whom we have so often failed. That is right, for Lent encourages us to take an honest look within ourselves.

Still...as this lectionary reading reminds us, during Lent it's also wise to look up, that is, to look beyond ourselves. After Nathanael left the shade of his fig tree, much of his life resembled one long Lenten journey to Jesus' cross, with plenty of grief, anxiety, pride, and suffering along the way. Yet along that same way, Nathanael saw why his journey was worth the struggle. For, as Jesus promised, Nathanael got to look beyond his circumstances and to see "angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

As we look within ourselves this Lent, may we also look up to the One who bridges heaven and earth and who, in the process, provides forgiveness for our failures, uniting us securely to the eternal God, forevermore.

Prayer

Gracious God, in your Son you have brought heaven into our midst. As we seek to recognize more fully our own shortcomings and our need for that forgiveness which you have made available on the cross,

make us also to know more fully the glorious truth that we are united to you through Jesus for all eternity. Amen.