

Sermon January 17th, 2020

God Invites Us to Participate in God's Kingdom Come

In our readings this morning, Samuel and Nathanael both receive invitations to participate in God's kingdom come. For Samuel, he is invited to become a prophet who will try to encourage Israel's kings to rule the kingdom of Israel in the way God wants them to rule it. Creating a kingdom vibe that reflects God's mercy, justice, and love.

For Nathanael, he is invited by Philip to follow Jesus. To be part of Jesus' core group of disciples. To witness all that Jesus will say and do to liberate God's people from suffering.

They both have a wonderful opportunity to play a major role in revealing God's kingdom come in the world. And yet, both Samuel and Nathanael struggle to hear God's invitation to participate in this kingdom come. They struggle to accept this invitation when it finally sinks in.

When I hear Samuel and Nathanael's stories, I think about our own invitation to participate in God's kingdom come. I think about our own struggles to hear this invitation. Our own struggles to hear God's voice and guidance for our lives (**Image**). Our own struggles to accept this invitation when it finally sinks in.

In a world with social media (**Image**). In a world with easy access to information. In a world where we are bombarded by so many different ideologies and beliefs on what gives our lives meaning and purpose. It doesn't surprise me one bit that we struggle to hear God's voice. That we struggle to hear God's invitation to participate in God's kingdom come. That we struggle to understand what this kingdom is all about and how we are going to live it out.

For the church in Corinth, they live in a very different world than us. A world where people didn't have the kind of access to information that we do today. A world where people didn't have an easy platform to spout off their ideologies and beliefs.

Yet, they too, find themselves struggling to hear the invitation to participate in God's kingdom come. They too get absorbed by the dominant culture

that surrounds them. Being influenced by this culture to act in ways that make it harder for them to live out this kingdom come in their lives.

In response to our struggles to hear God's invitation to us. In response to our struggles to live out this invitation once it finally sinks in. God keeps calling. God keeps inviting us to participate in God's kingdom come. God sends people into our lives to help us listen. God sends people into our lives to help us make sense of God's invitation. God sends people into our lives to walk with us as we try to live out this invitation.

For Samuel, Eli helps him discern that the voice that has been calling out to him is indeed God's voice. When Samuel is asked by God to tell Eli some bad news, Eli hears this news with grace. Giving Samuel confidence in his ability to be the prophet who will call out kings when they stray from God's ways.

For Nathanael, Philip walks with him to Jesus. Philip a good friend of Nathanael, who really wants him to be included in this group of disciples. Who wants to work with him to participate in God's kingdom come. Though Nathanael doesn't get fully onboard. As we will see later when Nathanael needs to sneak out at night to converse with Jesus. Nathanael does get it to some degree. Nathanael sees who Jesus is.

And though we don't hear about Nathanael's relationship with Philip, I wouldn't be surprised if Philip spends a lot of late nights helping Nathanael work through his confusion. Helping Nathanael participate in God's kingdom come. Even if it is in a limited capacity.

For the church in Corinth, Paul mentors them. Paul challenges them, and points them back to being participants in God's kingdom come. Paul walks with them. Helping them continue to participate in God's kingdom come.

For us, God sends people into our lives to help us hear and discern God's invitation to us to participate in God's kingdom come. God sends people into our lives to walk with us as we try and live out this kingdom come in our world.

Who is your Eli? Who is your Paul (**Image**)? Who is your Philip?

Maybe it is your pastor (**Image**). Maybe it is a close friend. Maybe it is a parent or grandparent (**Image**) or god parent or Aunt or Uncle. Maybe it is a

stranger that welcomes you. Maybe it is a mentor. If we take a moment to reflect on our individual call stories. Our invitation to participate in God's kingdom come. We will see that God helps us along the way through the people God sends into our lives.

God is persistent, because God wants us to receive all that the kingdom of God has to offer. Hospitality. Forgiveness. Reconciliation. Love. Togetherness (**Image**). Healing. New life. God wants to see God's creation renewed.

Let us pray, gracious God, we give thanks that you welcome us into your kingdom. That you give us opportunities to participate in your kingdom come. When we struggle to hear your invitation. When we struggle to live out this invitation in our world. We humbly ask that you show us patience. We humbly ask that you show us mercy. We humbly ask that you breathe new life into us. We humbly ask that you send people into our lives to help us make sense of what you say to us. People who help us stay the course. People who walk with us as we try to participate in your Kingdom come. So, that we all can experience what your kingdom has to offer. Hospitality. Forgiveness. Reconciliation. Love. Togetherness. Healing. New Life.
Amen.

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