

**Genesis 28** <sup>10</sup> Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. <sup>11</sup> When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. <sup>12</sup> He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. <sup>13</sup> There above it<sup>[a]</sup> stood the Lord, and he said: 'I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. <sup>14</sup> Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>15</sup> I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.' <sup>16</sup> When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.' <sup>17</sup> He was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.'

**John 1** <sup>43</sup> The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, 'Follow me.'

<sup>44</sup> Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. <sup>45</sup> 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.'

<sup>46</sup> 'Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?' Nathanael asked. 'Come and see,' said Philip.

<sup>47</sup> When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, 'Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.'

<sup>48</sup> 'How do you know me?' Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, 'I saw you while you were still under the fig-tree before Philip called you.'

<sup>49</sup> Then Nathanael declared, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.'

<sup>50</sup> Jesus said, 'You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig-tree. You will see greater things than that.' <sup>51</sup> 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.'

## Intro

A lady went into a jewellers to buy a gold cross on a chain for her god-daughter who was being christened. Assistant: "You can either have a cross, plain and simple, or we have got one with a little man on it." (!)

We live in a society which seems to be increasingly ignorant about the Christian faith and have less and less awareness of who Jesus is.

How can we see this change? What is it that might lead people to follow Jesus? The theme of today's readings is all about us being called to be followers of Christ.

John shows us that often the first way people can be helped to hear the call of God is if we help them to see. Twice John the Baptist says to his disciples "Look!"

In our gospel reading Philip says to his friend Nathaniel "Come and see," i.e. Come and meet Jesus; and it seems this is also exactly what Andrew says to his brother Simon, because we know he told him: "We have found the Messiah" and then the next day he brought Simon to meet Jesus.

Our friends and neighbours might not know it, but they desperately need to know the love and forgiveness of Jesus. Some of them will have very little idea of who Jesus is or why he came, and others will have some very distorted ideas. We need to say them "Look!" "Come and see,"

We can do that in a whole variety of ways: invite them to come along with you to church whether by Zoom or hopefully soon back again in St Mary's, or to come the Alpha course, or maybe to read a book about the Christian faith that you have found helpful - "Come and see,"

We might find it hard to imagine ourselves doing such a thing or to think of who we might speak to, but a very important truth that both our readings remind us about is that primarily it is God who does the calling. In our first reading Jacob is running away from his family, but he cannot run away from God, who appears to him in a dream viz many Muslims today.

We see this especially in our gospel reading. It is Jesus who goes and finds Philip, and later when Philip brings Nathanael to meet him, Jesus says to him: “*Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.*” *‘How do you know me?’ Nathanael asked.*

*Jesus answered, ‘I saw you while you were still under the fig-tree before Philip called you.’* Jesus saying this has a remarkable effect on Nathanael. *‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.’* Even Jesus is amazed by his response: <sup>50</sup> *Jesus said, ‘You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig-tree. You will see greater things than that.*

I wonder what Nathanael was doing under that fig-tree. Traditionally sitting under a fig-tree is where you did your thinking and praying. Maybe Jesus had seen Nathanael deep in thought or prayer and had the revelation that he was wrestling with some issue about which he needed to come clean, and he had decided to do the right thing. For Jesus said: *‘Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.’* Whatever had happened, Jesus clearly knew what was going on in Nathanael’s heart and he know what is going on not only in our hearts, but the hearts of our friends and neighbours.

So perhaps the first thing we need to do for our friends and neighbours is to start praying for them, not just praying for their needs but that they will begin to recognise the presence of Christ in their lives, that He knows them and loves them is there with them, that they might hear his voice. When we do that, who knows what opportunities might arise or what conversations might evolve.

