

Since my wife is not here today, I can talk about her. Back when I was a new husband, like all new husbands, I was pretty naïve. She was quite a catch, I proudly thought. But actually, it was the other way around. She is the one who caught me, and I'm glad she did. Yet she was content in allowing me to go through life thinking that I had found her. Some husbands are still under this delusion, that they are the ones who found and caught their wives. And that's fine. What they don't know won't hurt them.

Now Philip, in our text, is about as naïve as one of these husbands. Jesus decides to go to Galilee we're told. He finds Philip it says. And He tells Philip, "*Follow Me.*" But when Philip tells Nathanael all about it, he makes it sound as if he found Jesus and caught Him!

Have you ever heard someone say that they found Jesus? And did you reply, "Well, I wasn't aware that He was lost." Maybe they thought you were just being picky. But this actually gets to the heart of the matter. If Jesus found me, then I am the one who was lost, not Him.

But who likes to admit this? If I am lost, then I am not in control of my life. I do not know where I am if I am lost. And so I cannot know where I am going.

Not just new husbands, but men in general have a hard time admitting when they are lost. So they hate to stop the car and ask for directions. This may also explain why it is pretty common for men to hate to go to church. They do not want to admit they are spiritually lost and ask for direction.

But not just men. No one likes to admit such things. Others may need help, but not me. Others may be lost, but not me. Some are so stubborn in this that they refuse to be turned around even when it's obvious they are heading in the wrong direction. I recall hearing about a man who was driving up toward St. Louis on Interstate 55, but in the sound bound lanes! For five miles he drove in the wrong direction. He was probably saying to himself, "Why is everyone, but me, going the wrong way?"

Yet this is sometimes how I travel through life. What about you? Isn't it time to admit: I am the one in the wrong, I am the one who is lost, I need to be found?

In our text we see Philip saying to Nathanael, "*We found (Jesus)!*" But in time he would learn that Jesus is the one who found him. Jesus intentionally, it says, went to the very place He knew He would find Philip. And friend, He did the same for you. Jesus found you, dead in your sin, in the waters of Holy Baptism. He commanded your parents to bring you to these waters, and there He found you and made you His own, forgiving all your sins, and giving you life, real life.

And even though your baptism never leaves you, it is very true that you and I can leave our baptism, and so leave Jesus. And when we do, we become lost and need to be found again.

This COVID crisis is a monstrosity, not just to our physical well-being, but especially to our spiritual well-being. I know that a number of you are very concerned for your loved ones, praying fervently that when this is all over, they come back and are faithful in hearing Jesus' preached words and receiving His Sacrament.

I know that Christian parents pray fervently, for the same reason, for their children who are away at school, because it is so easy to fall into a spiritual habit very different from how they were raised.

Be encouraged all of you. No one finds Jesus. But He does find us. And He knows exactly where to look. He does not look for us only if we want to be found. He seeks us and finds us in all our hiding places. And He, in love and mercy, restores us back to our baptism, back to His house, back to His Sacrament.

He did this for our first parents you know. They sinned and so they hid. But He came looking for them. He found them though they were not wanting to be found. He forgave them. And He made everything right again.

Are there some who are using COVID as a way to hide from God? Of course there are. Just as there are some who are using COVID as a reason to puff themselves up with pride and believe themselves to be better than all the others who are hiding out there. We all make excuses. We all create hiding places. It's because we're all a bunch of sinners who become lost in our sins again and again.

But look at Jesus. He chose to become lost for you. He entered into that deep, dark place where our sin takes us. He found you there, and He keeps finding you. He forgives you. And He restores you. That deep, dark place Jesus entered is the cross. The place of death and torment. And He went there gladly because, to Him, finding you is worth it.

After Jesus found Philip, we're told that Philip found Nathanael. And Philip brought him to Jesus. That's how it works. There are not just billions of people way out there who are lost. There are Nathanaels in our community, in our families even. Maybe they do not want to be found. Maybe, like the Nathanael in our text, they have a low impression of Jesus and His church. Who cares? Philip found Nathanael, brought him to Jesus, and then Nathanael himself became a finder of lost souls. That is what Jesus means by saying of him, "*In whom there is no deceit.*" Nathanael would become one who would speak the truth of Jesus Christ to others.

If someone was lost, going the wrong way on the interstate, would you think nothing of it? That man heading toward St. Louis, by the way, perished in an awful crash. God had mercy on you, my friend, finding you, grasping you, turning you around in life, forgiving you for everything. You have been found by a loving Savior. No one is lost who is grasped by Jesus, who is in Christ.

There is a Nathanael in your life. You can be a Philip to him or her. And so they, like you, can know who they are in Christ, where they are, and where they are going both now and forever. Amen.