

**John 1:43-51**

Archimedes was sitting in a bathtub when he said it. Philip was talking to Nathanael when he said it. The 49ers discovered gold in California when they said it. Today it's a word that's as common as a household vacuum cleaner—"Eureka!" ("I've found it!") Archimedes cried "Eureka!" because it suddenly dawned on him how to measure the purity of gold. The gold-seekers in California cried "Eureka!" when finding gold in their pans of water. I imagine the Eureka vacuum is supposed to find the dirt. But all of these "findings" pale in comparison to what Philip found. "We've found the Messiah!" he shouted to Nathanael.

Some of you have cried "Eureka!" before, haven't you? You found something which had been lost, or you discovered the solution to a problem. Eureka! But did your discovery change your life? It did for Philip. Philip lived in a house of fish. Bethsaida, the town of Bethsaida...it means "house of fish" in English. That's the same town where two brothers lived—Peter and Andrew. Bethsaida was a quiet little town near the Sea of Galilee. Nothing much happened in Bethsaida. People didn't shout "Eureka!" too often...except maybe when they got a net full of fish. One day Jesus came to Bethsaida. He wasn't too well-known yet. He had done no miracles. He had preached no sermons yet. Why did Jesus come to Bethsaida? He came there to find Philip. That's the same reason Jesus came to your town. He came there to find you.

A man by the name of Jorge lived in a small town in Spain. He had a son named Paco. Paco had done something terribly wrong, and so he ran away from home because he was afraid. Jorge loved his son, and the next day he went to the store in the center of the town and posted a large sign: "Paco, I love you and I forgive you. Meet me here tomorrow morning." The next morning Jorge went back to the store where he found Paco. But with Paco were seven other boys also named Paco. They had also run away from home. They were all answering the invitation of forgiveness, each hoping it was his dad who would be there with open arms.

Are you running from your Heavenly Father? Are you afraid of what He might think of you because you have offended Him terribly with the sinful way you have lived? Do not fear, for your God meets you here, in the worship of His people not to punish you, but to forgive you. He knows fully, your miserable rebelliousness against Him. He does not ignore it or overlook it. He dies for it. When He found our first parents hiding in the Garden, He did not punish them. He promised them that He Himself would bear their punishment. He would die the death of hell in their place, and this Jesus did on the cross of Calvary.

Make no mistake, you and I deserve to be severely punished for the way in which we have ignored God's commandments. But that's not why Jesus is here. In His Word He comes to release you from the guilt of your sins. In His flesh and blood He comes to pardon your iniquity. When you were baptized Jesus found you. He claimed you as His child there in the waters, and gave you the gift of eternal life. Because you are His child, He does not reject you. Even when you reject Him to go your own selfish way, He keeps coming to you through Word and Sacrament to forgive you and draw you back to Himself in love.

If you have a friend or a loved one who is still running away from God—they are lost, and cannot and will not find their way back—you can do what Philip did. When Jesus found him he went and found Nathanael. “Eureka!” he cried, “We have found the Messiah!” And he brought Nathanael to Jesus.

Philip reminds me of a little kid for a couple of reasons. His excitement bubbled over and he just had to share his “Eureka” with someone. Kids do that, bless their heart. When they come bursting into the house shouting, “Guess what!” you know that something got them excited and they just have to share it. But sometimes they’re so excited that they get things a little mixed up. They know what they saw, but they tell how it happened just a little bit different because of their excitement.

That happened to Philip, too. He knew what he had witnessed. But in his excitement he mixed things up just a bit. Remember his cry to Nathanael? “Eureka! We’ve found the Messiah!” But they really didn’t. They didn’t find the Messiah...the Messiah found them! Jesus is the one who came to Bethsaida. Jesus found Philip, just like He found Andrew and Peter, James and John. Nobody finds Christ. He, because of our sin, is hidden from our view. But the wonder is, because of His mercy and love, our Savior finds us! He finds us in our hiding places. He finds us in our sins and guilt. He finds us in our despair and frustration and loneliness.

And because He finds us life is different. Life, now, is lived not for ourselves, but for Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us. And life in Christ is forgiven. Our past, present, and future is all forgiven. And that means that life in Christ is a journey to heaven. That’s why Christ Jesus comes to find us where we are at in life—so that we are no longer lost, and so that we are not lost forever.

Little Tyler was five-years old when he was diagnosed with AIDS. Born a hemophiliac, he contracted the deadly disease from contaminated blood. Surgeons placed a tube into an artery and a backpack of medication on his back. This way medicine was constantly pumped into his bloodstream. Tyler was not willing to give up one moment of his childhood to this deadly virus. He loved to run and play in his backyard wearing his medicine backpack. His mother used to tease him that because he moved so fast she needed to dress him in red. This way, as she peered out the kitchen window, she could quickly spot him.

Eventually the disease wore down his little body. He grew quite ill. When it was obvious that he was dying, his mother would sit at his bedside and talk to him about death. She comforted him by telling him that she, too, would die one day because we’re all sinners. But Jesus Christ came to be the Savior of sinners, and because of Him she would join him in heaven one day. A few days before he died, Tyler beckoned his pastor over to his bed and whispered, “I might die soon. I’m not scared. When I die, please dress me in red. When my mom comes to heaven, I want to make sure she can find me.”

We need not worry about Jesus finding us in heaven. Jesus found us here on earth through water and Word, so that we will be with Him in heaven. In fact, you know what Jesus did when He found you? He dressed you in red. His red blood covers over all your sins. You are washed clean because He found you.

That's reason to be joyful, isn't it? We can say, "Eureka! I've found Him!" But we really know that He, our Savior, found us. Amen.