

GET INTRODUCED TO JESUS!

Today's Text: Jn 1: 35- 51

Extracts:

Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples, and looking at Jesus, as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" *The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day...One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother [Jn 1: 35-40]*

On August 4, 1987, Carlina White, barely 19 days old, was stolen from her crib in the emergency room of Harlem Hospital, New York City, USA.¹ Police search for her kidnappers proved abortive but her mother, Joy White, believed that her daughter was alive. On January 4, 2011, a 23-year old woman named Nejdra Nance who was raised in Bridgeport, Connecticut but now resident in Atlanta, Georgia, called the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) after she had seen the photo of a familiar-looking baby on their web site. She had suspected all along that the family she grew up with was not her real family. The NCMEC got in touch with Joy White who confirmed that she had lost a daughter years back called Carlina White whose picture Nejdra had seen. DNA tests on Joy and her ex-husband matched Nejdra's who is now reunited with her true parents!

According to the NCMEC and Joy White, it was Nejdra's tenacity that led her back to her true family. We are quite familiar with a similar story. After Adam and Eve had been expelled from God's presence in the Garden of Eden, Satan "kidnapped" their descendants and trapped them in sin. But desirous to get back His lost children, created in His own image and likeness, God sent His only begotten Son to earth to rescue them. Like Nejdra, you have not felt comfortable in Satan's company because you believe that he is not your true family. But what have you done to escape from his captivity? You need to get in touch with the One that God has sent to rescue you. In this week's Bible text, we meet some disciples trying to get introduced to Jesus. There is something that we can learn from their approach for our own rescue. Come and see!

¹ Story based on "Kidnapped girl finds her own mom after 23 years," *TODAY* staff and wire, 1/20/2011, http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/41163230/ns/today-today_people/?gt1=43001#

1. Introduction: How the first disciples got introduced to Jesus

Most of us like to be introduced to people in positions of influence. They could be political or professional or spiritual leaders from whom we desire one favour or the other. Some of us are just name-droppers. They want to be able to boast among friends and colleagues that they know so-and-so big persons. It may not matter that they merely hired a photographer to take a snap shot of them with such important people who may not recognize them the next moment! No matter our motives, most of us like to get introduced to important people, and there is nothing wrong with it!

In this week's Bible text, we read about how the first disciples of Jesus got introduced to Him. This is an important lesson for us because for the first thirty years of His earthly life, Jesus had lived among those people but they were not anxious to get introduced to Him. There are today millions of believers who claim to be born again and can speak in tongues for days on end and yet they have actually not been introduced to Jesus! If you doubt that statement, hear what Jesus said during His Sermon on the Mount: "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness!'" [Matt. 7: 22-23]. Therefore, we are not talking about religion but a personal relationship. The resurrected Christ is now invisible to the naked eye. The earthly Jesus could be seen and touched by those who wanted to meet Him two thousand years ago. Perhaps there is something we can learn from their experience that will help us today as we desire to be genuinely introduced to Him.

For context, we recall that John the Baptist had just launched his own ministry. He had made it clear that he was not the Messiah but His forerunner. God had sent him to prepare the way for His manifestation. He (John) baptized with water but the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit. After God had revealed Him to John, he baptized Him in the Jordan River. Thereafter, John began to point Him out to his own followers as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" [Jn 1: 15-34]. The day after Jesus had been baptized, John was standing with two of his disciples when Jesus passed by. Looking at Jesus as He walked by, John said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" [vv. 35-36]. That triggered a desire in his disciples to be introduced to Jesus. How did they do that?

a) *Through John the Baptist*

As soon as two disciples of John heard what he had said about Jesus, they simply followed Him. When Jesus turned, He saw the two young men following Him and He asked them, "What do you seek?" They replied, "Rabbi, where are You staying?" He told them, "Come and see" [vv. 37-39].

The two disciples wanted to know where Jesus was staying. Do you think that was what they wanted to know about? Or were they dazed by His question, “What do you seek?” At any rate, He took them to where He was staying and we are told that they remained with Him from ten in the morning² till the end of that day [**v. 39**]. We are not told where He took them or what they saw because “the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” [**Lk 9: 58**]. He might have opened their spiritual eyes to see their mansions in His Father’s house in heaven [**Jn 14: 1-3**]. But they seemed to be impressed with their experience to want to tell others about it.

b) *By word of mouth advertising*

One of the two disciples of John that went with Jesus to His abode was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. He went to his own brother and said to him, “We have found the Messiah.” Andrew took Peter to Jesus and introduced him to the Messiah, that is, the Christ. Jesus looked at Simon Peter and said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (that is a Stone) [**vv. 40-42**].

Would you call that nepotism? Andrew found something good and he felt that his family should know first about it. What sense does it make to carry the gospel to the rest of the world and your own family members (parents, siblings and others) do not know about Christ? Yes, we know that members of His earthly family (brothers and sisters) did not accord Jesus the honour He deserved while He was with them [**Matt; 13: 53-58**]. But, after His resurrection, they became an integral part of His disciples [**Acts 1: 14**] and James, His younger half-brother, became one of the pillars of the early church in Jerusalem, along with Peter and John [**Gal. 2: 9**]. So, this kind of nepotism or favoritism is good!

c) *By direct invitation*

John the Baptist introduced Andrew to Jesus and Andrew brought his brother, Peter, to Him. But it was Jesus Himself who found Philip from Bethsaida (Peter and Andrew’s home town also). It was on the following day, as He was going to go to Galilee. He said to Philip, “Follow Me” and he did [**Jn 1: 43-44**]. Again, Philip did not keep the good news to himself. He found Nathanael, a skeptic, and told him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” [**v. 45**]. “We” suggests communication between Philip and the others who had already been introduced to Jesus (Andrew and

² In John’s Gospel, Roman time is used with the hours starting at 12 midnight and 12 noon, as is done today. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) use Hebrew time based on sunrise at 6 a.m. with 7a.m. as the 1st hour. According to Mark, Jesus was crucified in the third hour (9 a.m.) [**Mk 15: 25**] whereas John said He was led to the cross about the 6th hour (6 a.m.) [**Jn 19: 14**]. Therefore, the tenth hour in this text from John’s Gospel means 10 a.m.

Peter). Secondly, Philip knew the Scriptures concerning the Messiah [Lk 24: 44]. *He had now moved from knowing about Him to knowing Him.*

Nathanael was skeptical at first because he did not expect any good to come out of Nazareth. But after Jesus had proved to him that He saw him under the fig tree before Philip spoke with him, he exclaimed, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” [Jn 1: 46-49]. That suggests that *Nathanael already knew about the Messiah but he had now come to link Him with the person of Jesus of Nazareth.*

I can imagine how those disciples felt to meet the Messiah in person and in flesh! But through speaking with Nathanael, Jesus has promised all future believers like us, “You will see greater things than these... Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” [vv. 50-51]. Would you not want to be introduced to that kind of Man?

2. Getting introduced to the resurrected Jesus

The Son of God! The King of Israel! The Son of Man upon whom the angels of God ascend and descend! How can you get introduced to Him? Here are some helpful hints (among many others):

a) *Know who you are looking for*

Most people that you see in your place of worship may not all know who they are looking for. Some are there because they are looking for votes. Some are there because they are looking for business opportunities. I recall one instance in one place of worship in Lagos (Nigeria) some twenty-five years ago. It was always packed full of the political and business elite and we used to think that they had come to receive Jesus. One of the leading evangelists in that church was at the time the second-in-command in the Nigeria Police Force. But a few months after he had retired from police service, the church thinned down and the elite visitors stopped coming! Clearly, they were not looking for Christ but for the top police officer! With his retirement, he was no longer useful to them.

Therefore, the first matter to settle in your heart is that you are looking for Jesus the Christ and nobody else. Some people are looking for Allah. Some people are looking for famous religious gurus. Some people are looking for God, no matter how nebulously defined. Some people believe that Jesus is not the only way to God and heaven. *You must first and foremost settle it in your heart that “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” except by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth who was crucified, whom God raised*

from the dead [Acts 4: 10-12], and who is now our Advocate before His Father in heaven [1 Jn 2: 2].

b) Know what you want from Him

Even when some believers have accepted Jesus, they have done so for reasons other than salvation. Some people are looking for healing and as soon as they receive it, they go back to their old ways. Some people are looking for power or fame. Some people want bread and butter supplied miraculously without working for it. Jesus told multitudes who took boats to cross the Sea of Galilee, looking for Him, “You seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life” [Jn 6: 15-27].

You should want to get introduced to Jesus because He is the only one who can lead you to eternal salvation in heaven. Once you seek that first, all other things (physical and material blessings) shall be added to you [Matt. 6: 33]. It is only those who can endure to the end that will be saved [Matt. 10: 22]. Therefore, you must be sure in your heart what you want from Jesus before you seek to get introduced to Him.

c) Know how to obtain an appointment with Him

From this week’s Bible text, we have got some ideas on how to meet Jesus. For example, you may already *know about Him* (from your Bible studies and church services) but may not as yet *know Him*. Apollos was said to be “an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures” but he only knew of the baptism of John. Aquila and Priscilla took him aside and “explained to him the way of God more accurately.” Thereafter, he confronted the Jews publicly; “showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” [Acts 18: 24-28]. Paul was to say of him later, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase” [1 Cor. 3: 6].

Another way to obtain an appointment with Jesus is to *move with good company*. For example, a skeptic like Nathanael might never have met Jesus but for being in the company of Philip. The Psalmist says, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord’” [Ps. 122: 1]. Who knows if Jesus is not waiting for you in that church or that revival service or that public lecture?

Sometimes, *Jesus may* be the one to *specifically invite you*, as in the case of Philip. He has told us that He chose us, not the other way around [Jn 15: 16]. Therefore, He can set the stage for you to meet Him. For example, Matthew was a tax collector when Jesus called him to be His disciple [Matt. 9:9]. Paul was on the way to Damascus to arrest and persecute

Christians when Jesus called him to become His apostle to the Gentiles [Acts 9: 1-16]. In recent times, Jesus has directly called fervent Muslims living in strict Islamic countries to become His followers.³ So do not be surprised when Jesus wakes you up from your spiritual slumber to engage you in a matter of spiritual urgency in your life and in His vineyard!

3. Conclusion: Now, go and tell others about Him!

When Jesus was about to ascend into heaven, He mandated His disciples to go into all corners of the world to make disciples of all nations in preparation for His return as King and Judge. He said that He is with us always, even to the end of the age [Matt. 28:16-20]. The word of God says, “*Without faith, it is impossible to please [God]*, for he who comes to God must *believe that He is*, and that He is a rewarder of those who *diligently seek Him*” [Heb. 11: 6].

Do you believe that God has a Son, an only begotten One at that, and that His name is Jesus? Do you diligently seek that God, the Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, through *total surrender and obedience to His will* as revealed through Moses and the prophets and lately through His Son, Jesus Christ [Heb. 1: 1-2]? If you can answer, ‘YES!’ to each of those questions, you have been *truly* introduced to Jesus. Now, go and tell others about Him!

³ See for example, Bilquis Sheikh with Richard H. Schneider, *I dared to call Him Father*, Chosen Books, 1978; and Gulshan Esther, *The Thorn Veil*, Marshall Pickering, 1984