

“How Do You Know Me?”

So when I meet people in a room, I am fearful of getting the greeting, “Do you remember me?” So, in a preemptive strike, I will often say, ‘Hi. I’m Bill Te Winkle.’ But the sneaky ones don’t tell them their names. They just say, ‘I remember you Bill! You remember me, right?’ If I do not, my body and mind go into panic mode, which is why I ask Jill to always then introduce herself, to rescue me from the embarrassment of revealing that I have absolutely no clue.

As awkward are those times, I still prefer them to the time I introduced myself to a familiar face and he looked at me with a quizzical face before he said, ‘Te Winkle. Hmm. Didn’t you use to be somebody?’ Lord, keep me humble, yes, but was that really necessary? But, I digress.

I ran into the social media age version of this social problem last fall. On Thanksgiving morning, I got a very nice text from someone wishing me and Hope Church a Happy Thanksgiving. The person’s number didn’t show up in my Contacts list, but I was pretty sure it wasn’t spam, so I replied with a wish of Happy Thanksgiving to them. Problem avoided, I thought. Well, not too much later, the person sends a second email inquiring about my family, expressing their

regret in not being able to visit, and they attach a photo, not of themselves, but of their pets!

Now what? Do I play along like I know who this is? Do I just stop responding? Well, undaunted, I respond, “Beautiful pets! However, sadly, your number is not in my contacts. Who is this?” I got a name in response, but nothing more, and of course it was one of our members living out of town, but with relatives in our congregation. Oh boy. Now I’ve done it. But, thankfully, we ended up having a very nice text conversation and all ended well.

The problem was, of course, that this person knew me and knew that I knew them, but I didn’t know that I knew them. “How do you know me?” There was no point in carrying on until I knew that answer.

And that is the problem that Nathanael, and all people who meet Jesus, need to overcome. Before we can truly know who Jesus really is we need to know how he knows us. But that is the second step in building a relationship with Jesus.

What’s the first step to forming a relationship with Jesus and the body of Christ? Someone needs to invite Nathanael to ‘come and see’ Jesus.

“Come and see.” The power of invitation. That is the first rule of Christian Hospitality, which is my primary preaching theme for the next 18 months. How

do we show people Bible-based hospitality? It begins with an invitation to come and see Jesus: “I’ve met Jesus. You should come and see.”

The world-wide church started because the day after Jesus was baptized two men, Andrew and another person whose name we don’t even know, asked Jesus where he was staying and Jesus said, simply, “Come and see.” That’s it. That’s how the church began.

Day one of the church of Christ began with Jesus telling Andrew and the other guy, come and see where I dwell, my abode. Abide with me. The next day the church grew by third. Andrew went and told his brother, Simon, we found Jesus, come and meet him. And so Peter, the rock on whom the church is built, was recruited by his brother.

It turns out Andrew had another friend, Philip, who lived in the same little fishing village of Bethsaida. And he told him to come and meet Jesus. Now the church had doubled! And then Philip, who is so excited that he found Jesus went to find his friend, Nathanael. Now, Nathanael, it turns out, was the first reluctant recruit.

“You are trying to tell me that the Messiah our people have been waiting for since forever is from Nazareth!” The first skeptic. The first one who thought

that there was no way Jesus could be the Christ. So, what did Philip do? Beat him up? Challenge him to a duel? No. He said to his doubting friend, “Well, don’t take my word for it, come and see for yourself.”



And this is always the first and most difficult step for the ‘Nathanaels’ of the world. Will they agree to come and see Jesus?

If they, like Nathanael (John 1:43-51), will make that leap of faith to at least come and see, then they will find out that Jesus is unlike anyone they have ever met. Jesus is able to identify Nathanael’s location before he was called to come and see. Nathanael thinks that this may be some cheap magic trick. You know, like when someone knows what card you were thinking of. It’s a trick. You may not know how it is done, but they aren’t really reading your mind. Right?

So, Nathanael says, “How do you know me?” He has no idea the depth of the question he is asking. But Jesus does. Jesus tells him, “I saw you...before Philip called you.”

As we learn in our Psalm 139, God knows us when we sit and rise, when we go out or lie down. God knows us from the moment we are ‘knit together’ in the womb. God knows our thoughts, or desires, our words. Jesus possesses all of this

knowledge about us before we are called. Because, and hear this friends, Jesus knows us as his own family before we even meet him.

Here is such a very important understanding of the Reformed faith we teach and preach. God knows us. God chooses us. All we need to do is accept the marvelous grace found in Jesus Christ alone. Accept God's love!



This is then the second step of being called by Jesus. The first is whether we will 'come and see.' The second is whether we are willing to ask Jesus how he knows us? Because just like with my parishioner who was texting me, you cannot appreciate who this person is who is calling you unless first you find out *who* he is and how you know each other.

Maybe Jesus isn't in your contacts list. Maybe you have blocked his number, because he keeps calling at inconvenient times or when you don't want to be bothered. But, friends, Jesus knows you. You just need to find out how well he knows you.

If you will make that commitment, to ask Jesus how he knows you, then you will eventually, with Nathanael, come to the same inevitable conclusion:

"You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

This twofold profession of faith, if we could get it into the minds of the people who are the church today, would change our lives in dramatic ways. Jesus is not only the Christ, the Son of God sent to save us from our sins. Jesus is also the King of Israel, the King of Russia, the King of China, and, yes, the King of the United States of America.

My prayer for our leaders is that they will humble themselves and bow before the Throne of God Almighty. Then they will see how God will guide them and us from darkness to light.

So many Christians see only half of Jesus...the half that is the Son of God. They refuse to see that Jesus is our King too, he is the Lord of life. When Jesus teaches non-violence, when Jesus teaches the values of kindness and meekness, the lessons of caring for the poor and immigrants, the instruction that all people regardless of race or creed are one in Christ, he is not talking to someone else; he is talking to we the people and our leaders. When we understand that God is not surprised at the outcome of elections; that God is always sovereign, that Jesus is always King of Kings, then we can find a peace that comes from knowing this Jesus. If you believe Jesus is King, trust that Jesus knows what he is doing yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Jesus then turns the dialogue up a notch. In our translation he says, “Very truly I tell you.” The old King James translates his words, ‘Verily, Verily’, which has no meaning to us anymore. But the actual words he speaks, and I think he speaks them with great passion, he says, “Amen! Amen!”

‘Amen brother, you haven’t seen anything yet! You are going to see angels. They are going to be climbing up and down Jacob’s ladder, bringing heaven and earth together, through me.’ Jesus says. ‘I am the one the angels come to serve on this earth, and I am the one the angels accompany to my Throne in heaven, where I will be seated at the right hand of the Father.’

‘You are going to see me die on a Cross, and my angels will attend me. But then you will see my angels roll away the stone of my tomb and I will rise, the first fruits of all the resurrected bodies of those who know me and follow me and keep my commandments.’

‘Amen! Amen! When you get to know me like I know you, why you will see heaven come down to earth and transform it into something so beautiful that no eye has seen nor ear has heard!’

If you are ready to put the past behind you and leap into new and exciting 2021 then I invite you to come and see Jesus and to learn that knows you and loves you.



Maybe our call as a church, as a people of God, is to help people find the courage to not only come and see who Jesus is, but more importantly, to help them find the strength of character they need to ask Jesus, “How do you know me?”

Because once they hear that answer they will see things they cannot believe they have been missing. Then one day they can, with us, shout,

Amen! Amen! My eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!