

John 1:43-51 - Revised Standard Version

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Beth-sa'ida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathan'a-el, and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." ⁴⁶Nathan'a-el said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathan'a-el coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" ⁴⁸Nathan'a-el said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." ⁴⁹Nathan'a-el answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." ⁵¹And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Moveable Temples

A Personal Experience — John 1:43-51

In the Gospel reading from John, we continue an action sequence that began a few verses earlier when two men who were John's disciples started to follow Jesus. "³⁸Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" (John 1:38) Jesus said to them, "Come and see." These are the first words spoken by Jesus in John's gospel. "What do you seek?" And "Come and see." These are foundational sentences for us because the question is also directed at us. What do we seek? And the answer, if we look towards Jesus, is to go and see for ourselves. To get up and follow, to walk and experience what this person is all about, where he lives and who he is.

A few verses later, Philip finds Nathanael and tells him about Jesus. Nathanael asks, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"(46) It's a legitimate question in the sense that we all have preconceived notions of certain people and places. We already have those Dorset people pegged. We know the politics of those folks over the border in Cambridge. It is a natural thing for us to judge. And Philip's response is great too. He doesn't argue. What is there to say? The

Nazareth crowd might have been a bunch of hicks or had the wrong political flags displayed on their front lawns. Instead, Philip says, **“Come and see.”**(46) Come and find out for yourself, be your own authority on the matter. Jesus can represent himself better than I can give an account. Come and see, bear witness yourself, then you can know for yourself what, or rather who, I’m talking about.

The passage from John is full of action and vision words — *follow, find, come, see, behold*. The good news is an action story, not just for the people in the story itself, but for us. It is a story that prods us to take action, to see for ourselves, to follow. We don’t have to commit to a long journey. Jesus is staying at a house nearby, after all. All we have to do is meet him for ourselves, find out who he is, what kinds of food he keeps in his fridge, whether or not he makes his bed... **“What do you seek?”** A king? A miracle? **“...heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man?”**(51) Ok, then you are invited to come and see for yourself.

The Gospels have a lot of stories that involve walking and seeing. This is a get up and go see for yourself sort of story. It’s not the kind of news that you can order on an app, have delivered to your couch, and then flip to the next thing. You have to be curious. You have to be open to amazement. It is the kind of good news that is more than just “news.” It is an experience that provokes transformation.

A Temple of the Holy Spirit — 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

The passage from Paul’s letter to the Corinthians underscores this idea. Paul says that all things are lawful for him, but he, **“will not be enslaved by anything.”**(12) He says that the body is meant **“for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.”**(13) What we do with our bodies matters. Do we, through our actions treat ourselves like sacred beings, in body as well as in mind and spirit? I don’t want to get into the specific moral implications that Paul writes about, for he was writing to the church at Corinth with the particular questions, issues and temptations belonging to that place and time. However, I do want to talk about the spirit of what Paul was saying when he wrote, **“your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you...”**(19) This is a conception that our bodies are holy objects.

Like all objects, our bodies can become idols (our culture can promote this with it’s hyper focus on fitness and skin-deep beauty), or bodies can be desecrated in

ways through poor treatment. But even that is besides the point. The idea is that we live in bodies. It is from our bodily experience that life flows and is experienced through our senses of touch, taste, sound, smell and sight. We are bodily creatures, so a spirituality that ignores the body is somehow missing something. We worship in body, mind and spirit. The very physicality, the experience of pain, death and suffering as well as pleasure, life and joy are what define our spiritual journey. **“So glorify God in your body,”(20)** Paul says.

Embodied Listening and Metanoia — 1 Samuel 3:1-10

In the beautiful passage from Samuel we read earlier, we have a young boy who is hearing a voice calling him by name. He thinks it is old, half-blind prophet Eli calling him from the other room. After this happens a few times, the old man “gets it” and tells the boy what is happening and how to respond. Eli was able to discern whom the voice was coming from and guide Samuel in how to respond to the voice. As parents, guides, mentors, teachers, friends, we do this for each other. We listen and we encourage our friends and family members to listen to their high calling.

We listen with our ears, a part of the body. We see with our eyes, also part of the body. We speak with our voices, shaping the air within our body. The things we see and hear and speak have the capacity to transform us. Anyone who works in advertising or propaganda banks on the fact that sound and vision and speech have the power to influence people’s thoughts and actions. All media is designed to influence your mind.

Last week, we talked about “metanoia” or a “change of mind” being essential for the baptism process and being prepared to receive the Holy Spirit. We also talked about how we can witness the power of words to affect the shape of water crystals. (I left Masaru Emoto’s book “Hidden Messages in Water” in Bailey Hall, available for anyone who wants to look at it.) The change of mind that changes the structure of the water in our bodies is, in a way, changing the architecture of the temple. Viewing the body as a sacred object, not one to be idolized, but one to be offered up, is another way to conceive of our bodies. The body is a place of offering and an offering in itself.

If this all sounds too abstract, so I’d like to bring the concept back down to earth.

Embodying the Temple

There are innumerable ways to approach the idea that our physical bodies are temples. I'd like to lay a few of them out, briefly. I'm sure you could come up with many more.

We embody the temple in many ways.

- **In community** — the act of visiting someone at home or in the hospital is an act of love. It is an act of embodying Christ's ministry to the sick. When you visit someone you love or care about, you are, in a sense, bring the temple to them. You have formed yourself into an embodied message of love. Your presence lets someone know that love is near.
- **In personal relationships** — Alcoholics Anonymous has a 12 step program. In it, one of the steps involves recognizing people you have harmed and how you have harmed them. Then you must go and ask for their forgiveness. The act of getting up, facing someone you have hurt is an embodiment of healing that we are called to participate in. Anyone who has done this can attest to how difficult this can be. It is hard. You have to walk the walk, so to speak. But it is both humbling and liberating. Like getting up and following Jesus on the road, no one else can walk that walk for you.
- **In Worship** — The acts of singing together, of praying together and taking communion, these are practices that we do together. We enter the sanctuary, sit in a pew, stand up, fill our lungs with air and let it out in song and prayer. We open our ears and listen to the word. Sometimes we may daydream, but we are here. We are present. We are embodying a temple practice within ourselves as surely as we gather - even those who are participating in worship with us many miles away.
- **In nature** — Taking a walk or just being still in nature is an act that brings us into closer communion with God's creation.
- **Personal practice** — The things we do privately can have a sacred element. Take cooking a meal for example. We can give thanks as our eyes tear up as we are chopping an onion. As the diced onions sizzle in the pan and the steam and aroma greets our nostrils, we give thanks that this plant has grown from the rich darkness of the earth and is available to nourish us. We can bless it and offer it as sustenance for ourselves and others. We become temples whenever we enter prayer and give thanks and search for divine love in the midst of life's currents.

Moveable Temples — Matthew 25: 34-40

In the gospel of Matthew, it is written: “³⁴Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? ³⁸And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? ³⁹And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?’ ⁴⁰And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’”

The acts of ministering to others who are in need is a cornerstone of our faith. It is by embodying Christ’s ministry in our own actions that we make ourselves temples where the Holy Spirit may dwell and give its light to the world.

The tribe of Israel was once nomadic. They lived in tents. Today we live in houses with concrete foundations, but though our dwellings are fixed to one place, the function is the same. A dwelling place shelters and protects us. Our bodies are dwelling places where we may consciously invite and shelter the Holy Spirit.

Dear Lord,

Make our bodies a dwelling place for your spirit. May your divine, infinite love and will and intelligence dwell with us that we may be vessels of your light, your life and your Word.

Amen.