

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Jan 5th 2015

The scripture readings today speak to me about love, service and judgment. In 1 John we are told that, “we should love one another”. The psalmist proclaims, “Serve the Lord with gladness”. In John, Philip takes Nathanael to meet Jesus of Nazareth and Nathanael exclaims “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

I love Nathanael. I named my sixth son after him. Nathanael is so human. And I am so like him. I’m way too quick to judge. Nazareth wasn’t Rome or Jerusalem. No big city lights. Just a little, back water town. Nothing special. Isn’t it interesting that Jesus comes from Nazareth. A carpenter’s son, no less. Wouldn’t it have been more fitting if Jesus was from Jerusalem from a wealthy, royal, powerful family? Did God make a mistake here? What was God thinking? What WAS God thinking? Obviously, God’s thoughts are above mine and God knows what He’s doing. And I love Philip’s response. Come and see.

I recently buried an aunt. My dad’s older sister. She hailed from Girard, Kansas. Bet you have not heard of Girard. It’s a tiny town in southeast Kansas. She was born and raised there. She married and raised six children there. She lived a quiet life. She died after a 10 year battle with Alzheimer’s. What a horrific disease. It robbed her of her ability to recognize even her own children. You would have thought there would be no one except her relatives at the funeral. Not so. Aunt Velma was a woman with a love of God and a heart for others. People knew it and people loved her for it.

When Aunt Velma realized that Alzheimer’s was robbing her of her ability to think and remember, she commented, well, I can’t control this, so I might as well smile. And she did. My cousin, her son, commented that, when the veil of civilization was stripped away and she didn’t know what the rules were or who the people were, she still treated people with a gentle kindness. Even when she could not remember Christ’s command to love thy neighbor, she still did it. Another cousin commented that, for Aunt Velma, it was a small step for her to move on to the next life.

It may sound foolish, but I wish I were more like my Aunt Velma. Less judgmental and more willing to love and serve others.

As we launch into 2015, my prayer is for those of us who are quick to judge and slow to obey Christ’s command to love each other. That we would know that Christ loves us and that our reward for remaining faithful to his commands will be to one day see Him face to face.

Dan O'Reilly - Creighton University Clinical Education & Simulation Center