

## 'My friend, Philip'

24 8 14

Almighty Father,  
whom truly to know is eternal life:  
teach us to know your Son Jesus Christ,  
as the way the truth and the life;  
that we may follow the steps  
of your holy apostles Philip and Bartholomew,  
and walk steadfastly in the way that leads to your glory.

Our text today may be found in John chapter 1 and verse 46:

'Philip said to him, "Come and see."'

Three years ago, at our patronal festival, we were fortunate to bless an icon of St Bartholomew, written by Karen Blampied, a gift to mark the 140<sup>th</sup> birthday of our church. Today, it is with real pleasure that we can mark my 20 years of being an Anglican priest by dedicating a second icon, this time to his friend, St Philip, who according to John's gospel was the fourth disciple to follow Jesus, the first to be called individually to serve him. And it was Philip who straightaway went to share the good news with his friend, Nathaniel Bartholomew, who then became the fifth disciple.

Apart from the opening chapter of his gospel, John mentions Philip three times by name. So can you name them ?

John 6 v5 - 7     Cost of bread to feed this lot = 6 months wages

John 12 v21     Some Greeks ask Philip if they can see Jesus

John 14 v 8     Asks Jesus to show them the Father

I think of Philip and Bartholomew as friends but how can we know they were ? One piece of evidence might be the list of the disciples written in the Synoptic gospels, where Philip and Bartholomew are paired (Mt 10 v2; Mk 3 v18; Lk 6 v14).

But how did they become friends ? The short answer is we don't know. In 'The Bartholomew Gospel' which I wrote back in 2012 and which I hope you're enjoying reading month by month in our church magazine, I suggest a possible answer as to how Philip, a fisherman from Bethsaida on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, a fisherman like Andrew and his brother, Simon Peter, John and his brother, James, came to get to know Nathaniel Bartholomew from Cana in Galilee where once at a wedding feast, Jesus turned water into wine. My guess is simply that Philip and Bartholomew both went down to the river Jordan to be baptised by John the Baptist at the same time and there - by chance or design - they met. Both were young men, both were religious Jews, both were looking for the coming of the Messiah and, despite their different backgrounds, they found they had much in common: character, temperament and the way they made sense of the world around them.

If Bartholomew lived in Cana and Philip was in Bethsaida when Jesus called him, then it is reasonable to assume that Bartholomew was staying with Philip when Philip went to find him, that it was on Philip's family's land under one of their fig

tree that Bartholomew was shading himself went Philip did find him. I love the way Philip handles him. Excitedly he shares the good news and here I quote from Tom Wright's translation: "We've found him ! The one Moses wrote about in the law. And the prophets too ! We've found him ! It's Jesus, Joseph's son, from Nazareth." Philip has shared the best news possible. The Messiah whom they have long been longing for is here – with them – now !

But instead of sharing his enthusiasm and excitement, Bartholomew cynically pours cold water over his friend, dissing him with the proverb – "Can anything good come out of Nazareth ?" Instead of losing his temper big time with his mate Philip simply says to his chum: "Come and see" and the rest is history !

What is important is that Philip behaved like a friend to his friend: that he brought him to Jesus. Because he liked him, because he loved him, Philip was willing to share what was most precious to him with his friend. And that is what friends are for – to be with us and there for us when most we need them.

And the challenge to us today is simple: are we prepared to do the same – to share what is important to us with those who are important to us ? If we're not, then that does beggar belief !

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

*Preached at the Patronal Festival Eucharist  
St Bartholomew's, Dinard  
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