



JOHN 1:43-51

***When Jesus saw Nathaniel approaching, he said of him, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.”***

***“How do you know me?” Nathaniel asked.***

***Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.:***

***Then Nathaniel declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”***

***(verses 47-49)***

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I’ve always been intrigued by this encounter between Jesus and Nathaniel. Nathaniel’s response is so apparently abrupt and strong and faith-filled – there must have been something more going on behind the scenes.

What happened under that fig tree? There must have been something significant. Why else would Nathaniel respond with such conviction to Jesus' statement? Yes, it was a clear sign of Jesus having insight beyond the natural. Such knowledge was a sign of prophetic gifting, as when Elisha had divine knowledge that his servant Gehazi had run after Naaman and deceitfully received the gift that Elisha himself had refused (2 Kings 5:26-27). Such knowledge was a sure sign that Elisha was truly a prophet. This would be the natural conclusion in Jesus' case, too. He must be a prophet. But Nathaniel assumes so much more. Why?

It's all conjecture, but I imagine Nathaniel was having a profound encounter with God under that fig tree. Apparently, for Rabbis of the day, the fig tree was a favoured spot for refectation and quiet meditation. Likely, Nathaniel had been using it for exactly that. Was he reflecting on the meaning of his name – *"gift of God"* – and offering himself afresh in dedication to the Lord? Was he reflecting on rumours of the Baptist's ministry and questioning whether Messiah was at the door? Had he heard reports that John had declared one was coming who would take away sin and baptize with the Spirit and be revealed as Son of God? Had he asked, *"Who, Lord?"* Had he poured out his heart, yearning for Messiah, asking for a sign?

We don't know. But Jesus did. Something happened under that tree that Jesus pointedly put his finger on. So pointedly that Nathaniel couldn't help himself – with full-blown conviction, holding nothing back he declared, *"Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!"*

As readers of this Gospel, we're meant to see clearly Jesus' true identity. Already John, the Gospel-writer, has pulled back the veil repeatedly to give us an unobstructed view – Jesus is *"the Word"*, *"the One and Only who came from the Father"*, the *"Lamb of God"*, *"he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit"*, the *"Son of God"*, *"Messiah."* But at the same time we also discover, beyond doubt, that Jesus knows us intimately. He attends to our private moments. He knows our hearts. He meets us in times of quiet meditation.

How good.

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*So dear Lord – you who are Word and Lamb and Baptizer and Son and Messiah –  
hear my heart. Attend to my longings. Answer my prayers. Meet me in the quiet.  
For your name's sake. To your honour and glory. Praise you. Amen.*

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Pray:

Take time quietly before the Lord right now. Know that he is attending to your heart. Speak to him your questions and longings. Listen for his response.