

Revd Michael Burns  
Christ Church West Wimbledon  
Sermon : January 17th, 2021  
“The Second Sunday of Epiphany”

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**Epiphany 2, 2021**

James and Andrew had lived opposite each other for over 20 years. Each Sunday morning, they caught the bus – James to his church and Andrew to his golf club. Occasionally Andrew would try and persuade James to join him for a round of golf but to no avail – James was a regular and devout churchgoer. One summer Sunday, as they journeyed together, Andrew turned to James and said ‘why don’t you join me in a round of golf this morning. Enjoy yourself for a change. Going to church must be a waste of time’. James turned to his friend angrily and said ‘I take exception to that remark. You’ve no right to say that going to church is a waste of time. Please apologise’. Andrew immediately did so and they carried on in silence. Then James asked ‘what on earth prompted you to say that going to church must be a waste of time?’ ‘Well,’ replied Andrew ‘I couldn’t help thinking that we have travelled together every Sunday morning for 20 years – you to your church and me to my golf – and you haven’t once ever invited me to join you. I’d like to think that if what you were doing in church was worthwhile, that you would have wanted to share it with me’.

*Jesus said to Philip ‘Follow me’. Then Philip found Nathanael and said ‘Come and see’. Thus, Jesus begins his ministry and summons his first disciples. His call to them appears so compelling that they follow almost without question. Today’s*

reading encourages us to reflect on our own vocation. Have we listened for, and responded to God's call to us? As we thought about last week, we have each been called by name – have we fully responded? And, as we have responded, have we thought about inviting another to join us on this exciting journey of faith? Of course, it is very difficult at the moment to do anything like that – but when our lives eventually return to some sort of normality, as they surely must do at some point in the future, what will our churches and the congregations in them look like? In truth we don't really know – but we can probably predict that there will need to be some significant building up both of people's confidence to join together in worship and in working to attract newcomers to faith. But we do not lose hope and pray that once again people will want to return – both those who are the committed regulars and those who want to see if what we do in church is worthwhile enough to share with them.

A number of years ago, an in-depth study of churchgoing was carried out to discover how and why people came to church – and the inevitable large report was published. The author concluded there were just nine words which were the most effective tool – when a person asked a friend, neighbour or family member: “Would you like to come to church with me?” Philip found Nathanael and said ‘Come and see’. Amen.