

**Sermon Series: “Operation Go!”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—2/10/2008**

**Title: “Hardcore Witness”**

**Text: John 1: 43-51**

**Intro:** *Ills.: How do we get bread?—a study in skepticism*

**Theme:** When witnessing to the skeptical person, don’t rely on gimmicks or arguments; rather invite them to come and see Jesus and let the power of his word and promise convince them to believe.

***When skepticism raises its objection, knowing how to address it in Jesus***

- Understand why skepticism may be occurring in our sin-fallen world
  1. We put trust in broken and temporal things and people, and that trust is often disappointed
    - a. We believe that we can’t take anyone “at his word”
    - b. **Ills.: Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star**
  2. Uninformed assumptions fed by prejudicial keep us from recognizing truth
    - a. Nathaniel assumed nothing good could come from a sailor town Bethsaida, thus making Jesus suspect (vs. 46)
    - b. Arguing some out of their prejudice seldom works; rather a “come and see” approach may be the best approach
- Addressing skepticism with God’s Wisdom
  1. Instead of arguing with logic use God’s wisdom in Christ
    - a. *So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended, and the Gentiles say it’s all nonsense. But to those called by God to salvation. . . Christ is the mighty power of God and the wonderful wisdom of God. 1 Cor. 1: 23-24 (NLT)*
    - b. The power of a witness is not in the logic but the proof of changed lives in Jesus.
    - c. Philip from Bethsaida, maybe reason for Nathaniel’s skepticism (44), but also reason for a changed opinion(43)
    - d. Philip did not focus Nathaniel on his argument but on Jesus (***Come and see—vs. 46***)
  2. Don’t put down your friend for their skepticism but build on their quest for truth (***in whom there is nothing false-47***)
    - a. Jesus gives Nathaniel a complement to attract his attention
    - b. Paul did the same with the Athenians (*I see that your are very religious. Acts 17: 22*)
    - c. We may not care for the way an individual acts/thinks, but we must care about him or her redeemed by Jesus
    - d. *Jesus Christ . . . is the payment for our sins, and not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John2: 1-2*

***Overcoming skepticism through Jesus who gives us the reason to believe***

- Laying the foundation for faith in God’s Word
  1. Philip knew God’s Word enough to know Jesus was real deal to have a credible witness before Nathaniel
    - a. ***“We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote-- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” vs. 45***
    - b. A fulfillment of Isaiah 9: 1, *“In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan.”*
  2. Convinced of who Jesus is in our own lives, we become God’s **“living proof”** in word and action
    - a. *Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ. Rom. 10: 17*
- Moving the perspective from humanly impossible to Divinely probable
  1. Nathaniel judged life based upon what he could see (vs. 46) but Jesus gave him a perspective beyond himself (48)
    - a. **Ills.: From God’s perspective – Earl Weaver/Reggie Jackson/1972 Baltimore Orioles**
    - b. Jesus helps us to realize that the “unseen” spiritual exists alongside of the “seen” physical world
    - c. *For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already*

sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. Romans 8:24-25

2. The role of our witness is to take our friend to Jesus, the spiritual eye doctor
  - a. *The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind. Luke 4: 18*
- Building a long term relationship with Jesus rather than an immediate religious experience
  1. Jesus cautioned Nathaniel that faith by sight is dangerous (**Print and read vs. 49-50**)
    - a. **Ills.: Parable of the Sower/rocky ground (Print Matt 13: 20-21)**
  2. Living from one religious high to another will spiritually burn out a new believer
  3. Long term faith building takes much work with small immediate return but lasting Heavenly rewards (**51**)

### A study in skepticism

Four-year-old Jason fixed his eyes on the Sunday school teacher as who was trying to draw an analogy between Jesus, the Bread of Life, and common loaves of bread. To make the point the teacher began by explaining how we get bread in our homes. She said, "First the farmer sows his seed, then God sends rain and sunshine. The grain is harvested and ground into flour. Then the baker makes the flour into loaves of bread." She was just about to make the connection between bread and Jesus when little Jason interrupted, "Maybe you get your bread that way but we get our bread from Casey's Grocery Store." So much for the analogy.

### Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

The main Hall of the Hayden Planetarium New York City was filled with youngsters on a field trip. The lights dimmed and the magnificent star show began. The narrator introduced his talk to the hushed, awed audience by stating that on a clear night one can see over 3000 stars in the sky. Pausing to collect his thoughts, the narrator was interrupted by one solitary voice of a young girl who said, "One, two, three . . ." The narrator, recovering gamely said, "Well, most people take our word for it."

### From God's Perspective

Back in their pennant run of 1972 the Baltimore Orioles were managed by Earl Weaver. They also had an eccentric outfielder in Reggie Jackson. Much like the prima donna athlete on many present day pro teams Jackson like to march to the beat of his own drum. Weaver had a rule that no one could steal a base unless given the steal sign. This upset Jackson because he felt he knew the pitchers and catchers well enough to judge who he could and could not steal off of. So one game he decided to steal without a sign. He got a good jump off the pitcher and easily beat the throw to second base. As he shook the dirt off his uniform, Jackson smiled with delight, feeling he had vindicated his judgment to his manager. Later Weaver took Jackson aside and explained why he hadn't given the steal sign. First, the next batter was Lee May, his best power hitter other than Jackson. When Jackson stole second, first base was left open, so the other team walked May intentionally, taking the bat out of his hands. Second, the following batter hadn't been strong against that pitcher, so Weaver felt he had to send up a pinch hitter to try to drive in the men on base. That left Weaver without bench strength for later on in the game which eventually proved to be a costly move resulting in the Orioles losing a crucial game. The problem was Jackson saw only his relationship to the pitcher and catcher. Weaver was watching the whole game. Like Nathaniel, we only see so far—far short of what God sees. As we witness to someone like Nathaniel, our role is to help them to hear that there might be another perspective; however, we don't have to convince them of this. All we must do is help them to come and see Jesus. Like Nathaniel, they will only gain spiritual sight when they are impacted by Jesus and his life-changing Word.

**John 1:43-51**

<sup>43</sup>The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." <sup>44</sup>Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. <sup>45</sup>Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." <sup>46</sup>"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. <sup>47</sup>When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." <sup>48</sup>"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." <sup>49</sup>Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." <sup>50</sup>Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." <sup>51</sup>He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

**Matthew 13:20-21**

<sup>20</sup>The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup>But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.