

CALL OF DISCIPLES/ASCENDING.

TEXT: JOHN 1:43-51.

THEME:

Each Christian/believer carries around Jesus' temple within them, and wherever they go.

Grace, peace, and mercy, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bayless was a drug addict. Bayless grew up in Southern California where, during his teenage years, he became involved in a lifestyle of drug and alcohol abuse. After years of searching for truth, and a number of near-death experiences, he found Jesus as his Saviour when a 12-year-old boy shared the Gospel with him.

Today Bayless Conley pastors Cottonwood Christian Centre, a thriving church located in Orange County,

California. His television program, Answers with Bayless Conley, airs on television in over 100 nations worldwide.

Perhaps you have heard of this person before or like me, you have never heard of him, but apparently, through his television show he is now touching millions of lives for God, worldwide. The obvious is this; if you are seeking God to touch you, he will answer your prayer. God knows where you are in your life and he will reach you in one way or another if you truly want it or he will send someone like a person or angel or a vision along your way so as to bring you into a personal relationship with him.

The relationship he is seeking is close and meaningful not just a superficial "Howdy-doo", nice to see you, catch around the traps sometime relationship, but one that is like a family relationship. He wants to be there all the time, to be at the centre of the relationship.

In the Old Testament reading, we heard of how Samuel as a child heard someone calling out his name during the night, which he thought automatically, was the voice of the prophet Eli calling out to him. It was only after the third time of Samuel going to the prophet Eli, which Eli had in fact realized that it was God calling the boy, because he certainly wasn't him. God chose to 'call' Samuel rather than Samuel 'finding' the Lord, whereby he did obey God's call. Eventually as time went by God told Samuel many things which would happen to Israel.

Philip and Nathanael are good examples of this as well. In the gospel lesson we hear Philip telling Nathanael. **'We have found the one Moses wrote about.'** I'm a bit unsure about people 'finding' the Lord when they talk about 'finding' the Lord in our modern context [as with Bayless Conley], but the Lord sure puts himself in our paths so that if we seek him, we shall certainly find him.

How many people or how many times have you heard the expression "O, I've found God?" The reality is; that he comes to us. He is forever available to anyone and everyone who calls upon his name in earnest. And there are those, who when they hear him call out to them, respond to his calling. It is a good thing about finding the Lord, is that one is able to come into the Lord's presence and into his kingdom kingdom.

Now, what do we do with it? Now that we have come into God's kingdom in particular through our baptism into Christ: how do we live it? Do we have the right to do things and live our life the way *we* want to live? Or perhaps we may need to make a few adjustments and make a few changes to the way we live, act and perceive other people. Perhaps we may have to stop sometimes being too judgmental of those with whom we come into contact with: believers or otherwise?

If we have to make a few changes in our lives so that we are doing the right thing by God, then, in some cases that just might be the pill that's just a little too hard to swallow? Some people like what they're doing, and they may not see the need for any change or might not know that what they're doing is not the right thing to do in the first place!

In the epistle lesson we heard read today, in the first letter to the Corinthians, that before hearing and believing the gospel, the Corinthian Christians had engaged in sexual immorality as part of their heathen religious worship. Some were still finding it hard not to be involved in sexual perversion. They knew that Christ had died for their sins to set them free from death. They thought they were free, however, to do what they pleased. St Paul here defines a very clear-cut teaching of how a Christian sees his/her body. Having been redeemed from sin, the body belongs to God.

So if our bodies belong to God, then we had better start living and behaving like we are his children who belong to him and his kingdom. This should remind us that there are responsibilities and obligations we have to uphold and maintain. I'm trying to make us all aware that there are times when our behaviour can be offensive and repulsive to others.

When people see Christians, they judge them by their character and the way they, look, act and speak, etc. Christians are the link, the stairway where the angels are ascending and descending. Like Jacob fighting with God and then seeing the angels ascending and descending to heaven. This is the Christian, he/she is between heaven and earth, we live like we're in heaven yet we're still on the earth. Christians carry God within them wherever they go, they are the living temples where Christ lives; in our hearts. If you are a Christian or are God's people, you come under notice in whatever you do.

And speaking of God's people: on our television screens over the past fortnight or so, just about every night without a miss on the nightly news bulletins. You see star cluster bombs, explosions, smoke, fire, helicopters, soldiers scurrying around, dead people, injured people/children, carrying the dead to bury them, lots of screaming and anger/sadness/mourning. Images that are shocking, bringing the reality of mortality/death; all this are being broadcasted into our living rooms, right up close and personal.

So: what are your thoughts on this situation? What opinions do you have about this situation? Why is this going on? Why is this allowed?

The people behind the bombs and such are Israeli's, Jews, Hebrews, God's own chosen people. How do we reconcile this with the people of the Bible? Or is there a difference within the Jewish race of old and the modern day state of Israel? Biblically speaking, the question you

and I would be asking is: 'what happened to 'love thy neighbour'; be at peace with your enemies: do all you can to reconcile?' Or has the modern Israeli's got it right, keep attacking us mate, and we'll just blast you into submission and eternity? And the big question for me is; has God given his blessing to this 'sortie/skirmish/war' that going on at the moment? Is: all is fair in love and war? I don't know!

We may be asking the question right now, "Can anything good come out of this fighting? For me, the issues are too complex, and I don't have an opinion, because I don't know the full story and it would take forever to unravel: and even if I did, it's better off left in God's hands, he is in control.

But this I do know, and that something good did come out of Nazareth, our Lord Jesus Christ: the Saviour of the whole world came out of there in earthly form.

In verse 47 of our gospel lesson, it tells us that when Jesus saw Nathaniel coming, Jesus said of him, “**Here is an Israelite in whom there is nothing false.**” Isn’t that a nice sentiment and phrase to hear? Jesus said this himself. Wouldn’t that be a nice sentiment to have spoken about you? Jesus can see right into our inner spiritual being and into our hearts. Alas, unfortunately, we as people [human beings] see each other in the outward appearance, so that what we see is what we get. We don’t have the ability [some may claim to do otherwise] to see people like God does.

Even taking into consideration that we certainly realize that looks can be deceiving; never judge a book by its cover: you will know people by their fruits, which can be obvious outwards signs in summing up a persons character, but we cannot see deep into their souls like the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit can.

So when God looks deeply at us and sees Jesus in our hearts, in particular when we have confessed our sins, he then also declares that there is nothing false in us. There are some people [like Satan, who is forever on the attack] who would like to tell you something absolutely different, that you will always have flaws but God sees deep into our spiritual being and declares us pure.

In the end, God knows you and he knows how you live. Returning to our baptism and regular partaking of the Holy Meal ensures that we are keeping close to the Lord at all times. Your relationship with God makes your body the temple where Jesus lives as the stairs between earth and heaven where angels are ascending and descending. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.