

John 1:43-51

“Anything good?”

2nd Sunday af. Epiphany

January 24, 2021

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church,

Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[*Nazareth?*]

[1] “We have found Jesus of Nazareth!”

[2] As Arnold would say, “Whatcha talkin bout Willis??”

[3] “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (Jn 1:46).
Pathetic, potsherd Nazareth?

The prophets – They point to Jerusalem,
The rabbis – They speak of Bethlehem.
Not Nazareth.

[4] Nothing Nazareth – It’s a one stop light – no – one stop sign town.

It looks like a clump of huts
scattered and accidentally deposited
on some obscure hillside.

It just lies there
being an obstacle and hindrance

on your way to somewhere significant.

[5] You can’t have any real kind of life in Nazareth.

You’re talking about Galilee of the Gentiles.

Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

[*Anything Good?*]

[6] Can anything good come from surprise pregnancy?

Can anything good come out of terminal diagnosis?

Oh, the imperfections and deficiencies of life issues...

Those situations have scuffed-up surfaces
and make us uncomfortable!

We just want to be comfortable!

[7] Couldn’t somebody just brush or nudge them

under the rug, fridge, stove, or somewhere out of sight?

[8] Anything good?

If comfort must escape us, then let's take control.

[9] Let's sort those wrecked flecks of life by size
and divide them in piles.

Categorize, isolate, and disqualify the ones that don't cut it –
That aren't pretty, presentable, productive,
popular, prosperous, or powerful.

When we do, we “dress up a dustpan” with fancy words for murder,
like *abortion*, and *physician-assisted suicide* ...
ALL to lessen our disgust.

And we fool ourselves to think:

Nothing was coming from those situations but suffering.
All the culture's horses and all the media's men
couldn't put those scraps together again.
Who would even want to?

[*From Us?*]

[10] Anything good? Methinks we doth protest too much!

We end up like Nathanael in the Gospel of John.

[11] Poor fellow!
He dismissed Nazareth but he himself
came from a similar countryside settlement
just on the other side of the tracks.

Those sinful twins, [12] pride and dread,
they occupy our hearts and cloud our eyes.

We also sense our own [13] insignificance.

It compels us to

[14] compare, compete, complain, criticize, and keep score.

At the same time, it cuts us down to similar size.

[15] Oh! In our brokenness we sneer, “Oh, you!”—It takes one to know one.

Human means divided.

Human means dependent.

Human means pieces and particles, fractions and granules

—every one of “us” and each of “you.”

Human means impaired and unable.

We've long since ceased to aspire
to anything more than the kings and queens of crumbs.

[16] Anything good?

Can anything good come out of this fallen world at all?

Can anything good come from the sinful flesh – from you and me?

Yet...

Yet something summons us: [17] "Come and see" (Jn 1:46).

And someone keeps beckoning, "Come and see."

In each new human individual: "Come and see."

With every additional instant of our existence: "Come and see."

In every pulse that still throbs after our disobediences: "Come and see what good!"

With every breathe that fills these lungs

even after our wickedness: "Come and see how good!"

Jesus calls "Come and See"

From invisible comes the indispensable."

[*God Brings Help!*]

Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

[18]

Out of Nazareth comes the Father's compassion.

Out of Bethlehem comes Immanuel.

Out of Galilee comes God with us. "Come and see Jesus!"

Out of an embryo in a maiden womb comes unconditional acceptance for us.

Out of peasantry comes empathy for all.

Out of humility comes help for everyone. "Come and see Jesus!"

Out of his servanthood comes our salvation.

Out of his suffering comes your substitute.

Out of his affliction comes your atonement.

Out of his crucifixion comes your forgiveness. "Come and believe Jesus!"

Out of his wounds comes welcome for the weakest of us.

Out of him disabling himself with our diseases comes reconciling.

Out of him dying from our defects comes resurrecting.

[19]

The almighty Maker takes his place among us.

He stands beside the shards and slivers.

The Lord our God showers love and tender devotion.

He reaches the broken and the abandoned.

He touches the afraid and the ashamed.

Jesus gathers the endangered into his thick mercy.

He attaches them with his rich grace.

This God wants each and every one for his vessel,
whatever their age or appearance or ability.

He fills them full with words of pardon,
with water of promise,
with wafer and wine of presence.

And he serves up the sparkle of his kingdom.
He serves up the gleam of his own family.

[*Blessings Out of Life Issues!*]

There are blessings out of life issues.

Out of surprise pregnancy comes purpose. It belongs to the Lord Jesus. Out of terminal diagnosis comes fellowship, because the Lord Jesus created each person.

[20]

Out of dependency comes blessing, and
out of deficiency comes innovation,
because the Lord Jesus redeemed all people.

Out of impairment comes improvement, and out of weakness comes comfort,
because the Lord Jesus calls them to be God's own temple and treasure forever.

This makes humankind amazing, miraculous even,
for out of invisible comes the indispensable.

Yes, out of the invisible come the indispensable.

[21]

Hear this fable...

A man from the east used to fetch water in jars. He would hang them from either end of a staff he hoisted across his shoulders. Every day, the man hauled them down to the stream, filled them until they were full, and heaved them back to his house. But one of the clay jars had cracks, and it only ever arrived back at his house almost empty. This brought the jar shame and sadness. In fact, as he wept out his payload, he apologized for his failures to the master. The master paused for a moment, then patiently explained: "I am well aware of your flaws. Do you notice your side of the path? I planted there on purpose. And out of your flaws have come beautiful flowers!"

[22] Anything good?

We cannot always see the impact we make on others.

So however apparent anyone's inadequacies, the more evident is the grace of God.

Look for the grace.

Overlook the inadequacies.

From invisible comes the indispensable." Amen.

So we... Declare his glory among the nations,

his marvelous deeds among the people. AMEN! (Psalm 96:3)
