**The Epiphany Exhibition**

Based on [John 1:43-51](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn1.43-51)
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Epiphany 2

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We are in the season of epiphany, and epiphany is a word that means appearance, or manifestation, or even "to reveal something." Epiphany is about the man Jesus Christ revealing himself to be God through many signs and proofs. Luke the evangelist writes in Acts 1:3 that after Jesus had risen from the dead he presented himself alive "by many proofs." Some people, confessing Christians, say that you can't prove that Jesus is God and I suppose not. But it's clear that Jesus taught himself to be God, and he did many signs and wonders to prove that he came from God, and hand the authority to speak on his behalf.

The readings we have during this season are an Epiphany Exhibition. On the other side of town we have an exhibition grounds. The exhibition grounds are the grounds where merchants or others show or display their wares for people to consider. The New Testament is likewise an exhibition a compilation of the proofs that Jesus made to demonstrate that he was sent from God the Father, and that his teachings bore that stamp of authority. During Epiphany, these signs and wonders are put on display for your consideration, and ultimately for your faith. Proofs of Jesus’ divinity are put on display.

Now of course, that proof can be rejected, denied, ignored, scoffed at, but it is still proof laid before the hearts and minds of all who hear the gospel, so that each and every human being from one end of the earth to the other is confronted with the question Jesus asked his first disciples, "Who do you say that I am." Jesus did many proofs so that you would be able to "give a reason for the hope that is in you," and so that unbelievers who reject him would be without excuse on the day of Judgment.

Last week’s sign was his baptism where the Holy Spirit rested upon him as a dove and the Father declared from heaven that Jesus is his Son. Pretty strong proof to the eyes and ears of the many people gathered at the Jordan including John the Baptist. **This week, Jesus shows himself to be God to his first disciples as he calls them.** After calling Andrew and Peter, Jesus called Phillip and said to him "**Follow me**." And Phillip found Nathanael and said to him "**We have found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth son of Joseph.**"

Nathanael doubts, that anything good can come from Nazareth, which was Jesus’ hometown, and evidently the armpit of Galilee. But Phillip tells him, "**Come and See**", and Nathanael goes.

Now, in the meeting of Nathanael and Jesus, we have the Epiphany lesson, we have Jesus doing a miraculous sign and wonder proving that he is from God. Because Jesus says and shows that he knew Nathaniel before he even met him.

Ladies and gentlemen, who is the person who knows everything about you before you meet Him. That knows not only your innermost thoughts and also knows what you had for dinner last Thursday? Who knows every important event and every last trivial detail of your life better than you do? Who is a person that you cannot hide from because he’s everywhere and knows everything? That is whom we call “God.”

When Jesus demonstrates to Nathanael that He has the knowledge of God; Nathanael has an epiphany. Jesus is manifested first to his eyes, then to his heart to be the Son of God. And he says, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God.”

What a great account of a disciple of Jesus coming to faith in him. Phillip brings his friend Nathanael to Jesus, Jesus does something impressive, miraculous even; he manifests special knowledge, and Nathanael believes because of this exhibition, this display of knowledge.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are two things that I need to draw out of this account here, because we are sinners it’s really easy to read this account as an instruction manual for evangelism. First you find Jesus and acknowledge him; then he does miracles in your life to prove he’s in your heart. Friends that’s not what’s happening here; in fact it’s the opposite, first Jesus finds and calls you; and then he calls for faith in his promise.

First, in ministry, we need to remember that, though Jesus put his power on exhibition in signs and wonders, we must avoid the temptation of exhibitionism. Epiphany is about Jesus showing that he is God; Exhibitionism is about showing off.

I think I’ve told you this story before, but I’ll say it again. In my High School we had any number of motivational speakers come to teach us moral lessons. I can’t remember, though, a single thing any of them taught. I remember very clearly once, a bodybuilder coming to talk to us about something I don’t remember what. I would have long since forgotten except that sometime during his speech, he thought it would be entertaining to show us how he could rip something like 25 2 inch thick thick phone books in under a minute. I remember the exhibition, but I don’t remember the lesson. I was entertained, but I was not educated. I was captivated by the show, but I was oblivious to the message.

Exhibition driving is when you try and show off and make a scene behind the wheel in order to get attention. This epiphany we must remember that Jesus came not to do parlor tricks and get people's attention. In fact, most of the things he did, he told people to keep them secret. Why? Well, he wasn’t trying to impress people with tricks. He was trying to teach, and his miracles were to point to the authority of his teaching. Jesus showed Nathanael that he knew him better than he knew himself. And in order to make sure that Nathanael was not enamored by the miracle itself, Jesus says to him, “Do you believe because you are impressed at what I did? You will see greater things than these. You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

In the OT, Jacob had a dream about a ladder to heaven that bridges heaven and earth. Jesus is saying to Nathanael, the greater thing that you will see is that I am what connects heaven to earth. I am the bridge, the gate, the door, the one and only way to the Father. My disclosing to you knowledge was not to impress you, but to show you that I am the Messiah. When the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached, you should walk away not with some clever jokes to remember, or some real life illustrations, detached from biblical content, but with the greater thing that Christ came to bring, the forgiveness of sins by which he bridges the Gap between God and Man, heaven and earth, sinner and savior.

Secondly, you should notice that it’s not only Jesus being revealed in this story. So too is revealed the hearts of these disciples and of all sinful men. Look how the story goes, Jesus finds Philip (and Andrew and Peter) and says “Follow Me.” And when he goes to tell Nathanael about it, what does Philip say?...”We have found the messiah.” Who gets the credit for the discovery? Phillip takes the credit.

An illustration, think about the first words of a child. First words of a child. Mom, dad. Then “No,” then “mine.” One of the first sentences a toddler learns to say is "I did it." For example, You sit down and build a lego set with your toddler, and you end up building the whole thing yourself, all the while he's putting the blocks up his nose, throwing them at his sister. ***You*** take out the lego map, ***you*** finish the project and ***you*** hand it to him…and the first thing he'll do is hold it up and say "I did it", or perhaps if he's a bit more diplomatic "We did it." Yes friends, that’s cute but only because he’s a toddler. It’s cute but it’s an epiphany of the sin we’re born with.

Likewise, when you play a game with a young child, he needs help. And when you tell him what cards to play, what move to make on the gameboard...whatever...it doesn't matter. He wants to win. And if he wins by receiving your help it doesn't matter, he's going to take all the credit for himself. That’s sin, cute in a harmless toddler, in an adult it is sad and pitiable, for god gets the credit for all we do.

Ladies and Gentlemen, think about it. “***No”*** is a word of rebellion. “Mine” is a word of selfishness. "I did it" is a word of independence and self-glorification. All are evidence of sin. They are small manifestations, "Epiphanies", evidences of a claim that God makes in Romans 3:23 that all people have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and of the Sound biblical doctrine that we are by nature sinful and unclean. 1 John 1:10 says, "If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and his Word is not in us."

The evidence of our sinfulness is all around us, from childhood thru old age, from the womb to the tomb. But the full extent of our sinfulness is not to be believed from the weight of the evidence, or the magnitude of our disobedience. You believe you are a sinner because God says you are, and if you deny it, or minimize it, or say "I make mistakes, but I try and am basically good natured", you are calling God a liar.

More than that, you are taking away his gavel and making yourself the judge of your sinfulness. But you are in no position to judge. God is, and he says that from the hearts of men come only evil lusts and desires, not good ones (Mark 7:21). He says that you are completely and totally in bondage to sin and cannot free yourself, and you must believe it because he said it, not because you are convinced of the evidence. David says in Psalm 19:12, "**Who can discern his error? [Lord God], Declare me innocent from hidden faults**." You have faults that are hidden not only from everyone around you, but even faults hidden from yourself. The truth is clear in God's word, no matter how much you feel your sin, or know your errors...you are a worse sinner than you think you are. Take that information on the authority of God who sees and knows all.

You are a worse sinner than you even realize, and you know this by faith in God who knew you when you were under the fig tree, who knows your inner most thoughts, who like Nathanael, knows you better than you know yourself. When he says you are a poor miserable sinner, believe it, so that, when he says that Jesus of Nazareth is a great and mighty savior and he came for you…you will receive him.

And you do receive him, in his blood for the forgiveness of sins. For he has revealed himself, and today puts himself on exhibition in bread and wine as he poured out his blood on the cross into the cup we drink which is a participation in his redemption for us, the forgiveness of our sins. We approach the altar sinners because God who knows us better than ourselves gives testimony. But we leave saints because God declares us righteous through the blood of his son.