

“Everything Good” – comes from God – even when and where we don’t expect it.

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” That’s our guiding phrase from our gospel text for this week. “Anything good?” Surely you can hear how that sounds. Surely in our contentious environment, you hear the presupposition behind the sarcasm. You can hear some prejudice tucked away in such an innocuous joke.

Worship can be a place for self-examination of the state of our souls as we bring our all before the Lord. Worship can be a time where we hold up the ideal of the human community and pledge to live into it as we seek union with the God we follow. Sometimes, worship confronts us with our sinfulness; and other times, worship offers us grace and healing and a way forward.

That being said, we don’t know why Nathaniel said what he said. Maybe he just wanted to be left alone, didn’t want to be bothered by Philip and his new best friend. Maybe he really thought anyone from a hick town like Nazareth wouldn’t have anything of significance to say to him. Maybe he had given up the search that Philip was still on. Maybe he had decided he didn’t need a Messiah after all. He was doing all right on his own.

But was he? Are we doing all right on our own? Most of the time, we think so. Most of the time, we are content with the world as it is, with our lot in it. Most of the time, we are grateful that things aren’t any worse than they are. And the Word of the Lord is rare most days.

And every now and then, we ache to hear that Word. When we let down our guard, in our heart, we long to know and to be known. We want so much more of life than we settle for most of the time. We want our relationships to be deep and satisfying. We want those we love to trust in that love; we want to live the fullness of that love. We want someone to know us, all our weaknesses and strengths, all our beauty and ugliness; to know us and love us still.

It almost sounds like fantasy, doesn’t it? Such knowledge, such love is not possible in this world, a world where the Word of the Lord is rare. So, we bury such thoughts, such quiet desperation behind the facade of being all right, of not needing anyone or anything. Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Or anywhere for that matter? Yes, “Everything Good” – comes from God – even when and where we don’t expect it.

[personal stories of good coming from the poor - Frank, from one not speaking English; Eduardo, and from of an entirely different culture; and Kim (We called him Kim Chi – spicy cabbage.) Out of poverty comes revelation, out of Nuevo Laredo comes passion, out of Korea comes great praise of God.

Out of Nazareth can come the one who knows and who loves still. Out of the darkness of the night can come the voice that calls us by name. Out of our church filled with hypocrites and sinners can come a sense of family and community that remakes us. Out of our houses can come a trust and openness that gives you that sense of home you were created for. From surprising people can come unconditional love that builds us up and makes us whole.

Let us claim it, even as we claim our call to be what Christ has called us to be.