



The Message: Woven in the Depths of the Earth

We visit Jesus when he is gathering around him the rag tag band of folk we now call the disciples. Jesus has approached Philip, who gets excited enough to go tell Nathanael about this neat guy with an alternative life path for them. Nathanael asks Philip, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

Nathanael is often put down for this question – it's often seen as a cynical sneer. But in the context of all the bad news of any day, is it any different from our tired, "Can anything good come from this world?" Can anything good come from the latest attempt to save the economy? Can anything good come from wars, civil strife, greed?

The answer, existed long before Jesus. It's expressed – perhaps never more beautifully in the psalm, my favourite psalm. (Psalm 139)

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

Can anything good come from Nazareth? Nathanael asks Philip. Philip responds, 'Come and See!'

What does Nathanael see? He sees that he is *known*
"My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed."

Jesus tells him he will see greater things even than being *known* by God.
What will he see? *Healings, transformed lives, souls redeemed.*

He will see visions of the *heavens opened* – angels ascending and descending

At each celebration of a life, we hear of the lasting impact of a spirit – no matter the age or life situation, blessings are there for us to receive, to hold on to, to give us what we need to carry on ourselves.

The question that presses in on me today is,
'Can anything good come from us? '

A sociologist has recently published a book called, *Atheist Overreach*. He isn't attacking atheism, but argues that the claims of atheists can't be defended logically or scientifically. I'll leave you to read those arguments.

Lately atheists have been suggesting that you can be good without God -- that universal benevolence is a real possibility. Smith suggests that human beings have proven that to be impossible.

I try not to mention Trump in sermons. You hear enough of him elsewhere. But he is motivating ethicists to look with new eyes at human nature. There have been other leaders who have served only their own needs, but we don't have their tweets to realise how deeply petty a human being can be. He has become the poster child of those who argue for original sin.

They would suggest that if there is no reason for people to be good, the majority will tend to serve their own needs. The author of *Atheist Overreach* argues that atheists should be quiet about being atheists, because it is in their own best interest for the people around them to have a moral framework that treats others well -- so they get treated well.

When my husband and I were first time parents, one night when we were hanging over the crib watching Jessica sleep, I asked Alan, "Do you believe in original sin?" "No!" was the emphatic answer of my Anglican priest professor of Christian history husband. A few months later, when she was howling for her pacifier we were desperately and unsuccessfully looking for, I looked at him and said, "I think original sin kicks in at three months." And that's when a caring family, safe communities, ethical teachings of faithful folk begin their work of ensuring that something good comes of each of us.

When Nathanael asks perhaps scornfully, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" we can hear Philip saying to us, "Come and see?"

We are known.

At our baptism, we hear that we are intimately known by God.

We will see greater things even than this.

We see lives transformed.

We see visions of the heavens opened – angels ascending and descending.

People attempting to be those angels ascending and descending – moving between God and humans, relating more intimately to God and to other people.

Our calling:

create a caring community where we seek to know one another;

Create a safe community for Gwyneth and all children;

where transformation of life is what we are about;

where we seek to grow closer to God and to relate more intimately to one another.

As we practise believing in God, -- and it is a lifelong practice, not an achievement in a moment. As we practise believing in God, we begin to put our trust in God. We bet our lives on the truth that there is a God. We open our hearts to care for others. We begin to believe that God is with us, that nothing can separate us from God's love.

Today skeptics might ask, "Can anything good come out of Port Credit? Can anything good come out of Clarkson? Mississauga? Oakville?"

The answer is us! God is calling us to be the good that God needs in our communities, in our country and in the world.

Can anything good come from this world? We just have to look at this precious scrap of humanity in Gwyneth to say "Yes!"

God is so intimately a part of our humanity that good persists in popping up. The prophets foretold it; Jesus showed us. God has known us since we were intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Surely God can bring good from us.

*Hymn 453: Out of Deep, Unordered Water

Out of deep, unordered water God created land and life,
World of bird and beast and, later, twosome people, husband, wife.
There is water in the river bringing life to tree and plant.
Let creation praise its giver: there is water in the font.

Water on the human forehead, birthmark of the love of God,
Is the sign of death and rising; through the seas there runs a road.
There is water in the river bringing life to tree and plant.
Let creation praise its giver: there is water in the font.

Standing round the font reminds us of the Hebrews' climb ashore.
Life is hallowed by the knowledge: God has been this way before.
There is water in the river bringing life to tree and plant.
Let creation praise its giver: there is water in the font.