



DAILY ENCOURAGEMENTS

Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

December 12, 2023



Photo: Our Daily Bread

PREJUDICE AND GOD'S LOVE

Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?

John 1:46

READ John 1:43-51

"You're not what I expected. I thought I'd hate you, but I don't." The young man's words seemed harsh, but they were actually an effort to be kind. I was studying abroad in his country, a land that decades earlier had been at war with my own. We were participating in a group discussion in class together, and I noticed he seemed distant. When I asked if I'd offended him somehow, he responded, "Not at all . . . And that's the thing. My grandfather was killed in that war, and I hated your people and your country for it. But now I see how much we have in common, and that surprises me. I don't see why we can't be friends."

Prejudice is as old as the human race. Two millennia ago, when Nathanael first heard about Jesus living in Nazareth, his bias was evident: "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" he asked (John 1:46). Nathanael lived in the region of Galilee, like Jesus. He probably thought God's Messiah would come from another place; even other Galileans looked down on Nazareth because it seemed to be an unremarkable little village.

This much is clear. Nathanael's response didn't stop Jesus from loving him, and he was transformed as he became Jesus' disciple. "You are the Son of God!" Nathanael later declared (v. 49). There is no bias that can stand against God's transforming love.

By James Banks

PRAY & REFLECT

Help me, loving God, to overcome any biases I may have and to love others with the love You alone can give. Amen

What biases have you faced or wrestled with? How does Jesus' love help you deal with them?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

In John 1:51, Jesus told His first disciples, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man." At first glance, this might seem to be an odd word picture, but it points back to Jacob's dream in Genesis 28:12: "He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." In this application, Jesus Himself is the ladder from which we can make our way from earth to heaven. This was Christ's first hint, opaque though it may be, of His ultimate mission. No wonder Jesus would also say, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). – By **Bill Crowder**

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