

Google knows everything about you. It is like a private detective has been following you around. Google knows where you have been and at what time, your photos, the terms you search for, everything you have deleted, your advertising profile, all the apps you use, your UTUBE history, your Word documents, bookmarks, emails, every question you've asked your google device, and your contacts. In addition, your webcam and microphone can be unmasked. I would say this is an invasion of my privacy. They took all this data down about me, with just a few punches on my keyboard with these hands.

There are many evil forces out there that like to use your private information to deceive others and steal from them. Recently, members of Open Bible got a text from Pastor Mark Schulz, that he wanted them to buy gift certificates for Women With Breast Cancer, who were getting treatment at the Villages hospital. One member, Sharyn Daw, actually bought \$700.00 worth of gift certificates to help these cancer fighters. But it was not me. Fortunately, Sharyn notified her credit card company and immediately, they took the charge off her account. I had to send out a mailing to everyone, not to respond to this thief. I notified the FBI of the number.

I don't know about you, but I like to keep my life as a pastor, private. I don't want everyone to know every place I go, or what I like and don't like. I assume it is the same with you. Even toddlers like to close the door behind them so they can play without Mom or Dad looking over their shoulder. We all like our privacy and expect others to respect it.

However, from our Gospel Lesson this morning we learn about a happy invasion of privacy. Two men, Philip and Nathanael, were found by the Lord, known by the Lord, and informed by the Lord. Jesus wants to invade your privacy for the same reason and in the same way. Let's find out why that's a good thing. Our theme is "A Happy Invasion of Privacy".

The impression that many people have about God is that he is just sitting back waiting for sinners to find him. That's not how the true God operates however. We see that already in the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve fell into sin, God did not wait for his children to come to him and confess what they had done. He went searching for them – not only to chastise, but also to share that he had a plan to get them out of the mess they had willingly stepped into.

Likewise when you look at how Jesus ended up with his Twelve Disciples, you'll see that it's because he went searching for them. Of course Philip would report to his friend Nathanael, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:45), but Philip had not found Jesus. Jesus had found Philip. And that's how it works with you too. You didn't find Jesus when you came to faith. You came to faith because Jesus found you. That's how it has to work. Paul explains why when he wrote: "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:4, 5). A hiker who has fallen down a cliff and broken his ankle and back, may say to his rescuers: "I'm glad I found you!" But everyone really knows that because of his condition what he means is "I'm glad you found me!" That's how it with us. Sin has so damaged us that by nature we don't even want to reach out to God. He needs to reach out to us if we're going to be saved from our sins and the punishment that should await.

But how exactly does Jesus find us these days? He's not still walking the streets as he did two thousand years ago when he found Philip. No, but look at the way in which Jesus found the next disciple, Nathanael. He did so through Philip. After Philip was brought to faith he ran off and found his friend Nathanael to tell him about Jesus. This is how Jesus still finds people today – through the witness of faithful disciples like you.

But does the thought of telling another person about Jesus make you nervous? I mean what if they ask you a question about your faith that you can't answer? Don't worry about that. Just use Philip's evangelism approach. When he told Nathanael he believed Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, Nathanael asked: "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:46) How did Philip respond? Did he try to convince his friend of the truth with a rehearsed evangelism presentation? No, he simply said, "Come and see." That's still a great tactic when witnessing today. Simply invite your friends to come and see the Savior for themselves. But don't just encourage them to come to church, invite them to study the Bible. And invite them again and again.

If you've been the one invited to meet Jesus through his Word, respond as Nathanael did. He went with Philip to meet Jesus. He didn't say, "Well I'm busy right now Philip. Maybe later." Finding the Messiah, the one who would take away his sins and open eternal life, was more important to Nathanael than his work, his hobbies, and even his family. Do we feel the same way? Or when we're invited to come and see our Savior through a study of his Word, are we quick to come up with an excuse of why it's not convenient? But how do you know there will be a more convenient time? You don't. Because none of us knows when our end will come. Even as I speak right now Jesus is invading your privacy and reaching out to you through this message to learn more about him. You won't be sorry that you did.

When Nathanael came to meet Jesus he was in for a surprise, for he was already known by the Lord. John records the meeting like this. "When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." 48 "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." 49 Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel" (John 1:47-49).

Whenever I read this section of Scripture I always wonder, "What exactly had Nathanael been doing under the fig tree that it was significant enough for Jesus to mention and for Nathanael to be impressed that Jesus knew he had been sitting there?" Perhaps that fig tree was Nathanael's getaway spot - the place he went to be alone. Then I think of how thousands of years earlier Adam and Eve had also sought refuge under a fig tree after their sin of eating the forbidden fruit. They took the fig tree's leaves and sewed them together to make clothing. It was a lame attempt to cover their shame. Is that also what Nathanael had been doing under the fig tree - hiding out because he was embarrassed of who he was and what he had done or failed to do?

If so, it was a happy invasion when Philip found him there because if Nathanael was ashamed of what he had become and was seeking God's forgiveness, Philip had the solution. The Messiah had come! Just as God provided better covering for Adam and Eve when he gave them sheepskin clothing, so Jesus, the Lamb of God, would provide a perfect covering to hide Nathanael's sins from the holy God's view. That's in fact why Jesus could say of Nathanael, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false" (John 1:47).

Jesus says the same of you this morning - that there is nothing false in you. He says that even if you lied to someone about why you couldn't come over to their house for dinner. Or you made up some excuse why you couldn't help someone out on a particular day, because you really didn't want to take the time to spend at their house. Jesus says that he sees no deceit in you because he's already paid the penalty for those sins and he now invites you to stand in the full light of his glory instead of slinking around in the shadows of sin.

Nathanael was impressed with Jesus' omniscience, his ability to know all things - even

where Nathanael had been hanging out. But that's not what Jesus wanted Nathanael to marvel about. Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." 51 He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John 1:50, 51).

Philip and Nathanael had both been found and known by the Lord, and now they were going to be informed by him. They were going to learn the truth that we all need to know and believe to get into heaven. Jesus compared himself to a ladder that connects heaven and earth – a ladder on which angels would ascend and descend. This was a reference to a well-known event from Jewish history. Jesus was thinking about the time when Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, was forced to run away from his home. On his first night, Jacob lay down to sleep on the hard ground and had nothing but a rock to use as a pillow. It probably didn't seem as if God was with him. And why should he be? It had been Jacob's sin and his lack of trust in God's promises that had forced him to flee in the first place. But instead of seeing nightmares, Jacob received a wonderful dream that night. He saw a ladder which stretched all the way up to heaven and on that ladder angels went up and down. This was God's way of reassuring Jacob that he was not alone. God had not abandoned him in spite of his sins. Jacob's prayers were being heard and God was answering them by sending angels to attend to him.

Now in our Gospel Lesson, Jesus explains how he himself is the ladder which connects heaven to earth. It is through Jesus that we ascend to heaven with the angels, and we do so on the ladder of his cross.

Google, Facebook, and Twitter are not going to apologize for invading so many people's privacy. Their reasoning is that they're only trying to gain helpful information, so merchants can put before you products you like, and to make sure that your line of thinking is not too conservative. If you turn out to be dangerous to their line of thinking, you will be silenced.

That's little consolation to us however. And yet we've learned today that there is such a thing as a happy invasion of privacy. We're happy that God cared enough about us to break into our world and save us from our sins. Share that truth with the lost and the lonely, with all who are hanging out by themselves under their fig trees. Invite them to come and see their Savior who already sees, knows, and loves them. Amen.