

1.17.21 Ep2 Now Where You are From but Whose You Are

- This week I heard a reading from back in the 1939 from the minutes book of the Lutheran Church's Eastern Pennsylvania Ministerium
 - Now normally, this would be something either quaint, or boring, but THIS TIME there was an element of local interest
 - It seems that 81 years ago the president (leaders we now call bishops) – the president of the Lutheran ministerium and the district's local Lutheran president went to visit the LECK KILL PARISH AT HEPLER'S CHURCH to help them call a new pastor
 - Except for natives of the area, not only is that place obscure today, it was even obscure back then, so right there in the minutes that have become an historical record, the two Lutheran presidents clarified where the Leck Kill parish was... "Monday, January thirtieth-- President Huegel of the Pottsville Conference and I visited the joint church councils of the Leck Kill parish at Hepler's Church, *some miles removed from Hegins, some miles from Tremont, some miles from Pottsville.*"
- Leck Kill was an obscure place back then, some people would say that Schuylkill Haven or Cressona are obscure places today, Oley where we live is even smaller, but apparently back in Jesus' day NAZARETH was obscure too
 - In fact in the gospel reading for today, we just heard that Jesus called Philip to be a disciple, and then Philip in turn went and found Nathaniel and told him that he had found Jesus – the one about whom the prophets had written long ago – Jesus of Nazareth
 - And Philip was incredulous! He said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"
- NAZARETH WAS TOO OBSCURE, HE THOUGHT for the promised one – but not too obscure for God! In fact God seems to have deliberately put his Son, Jesus in that obscure little town
 - This is the first piece of good news for us today – no place, not Haven not Leck Kill not Nazareth – no place is too little or obscure to be graced with the presence of God's Son!

- But there's more
- When Jesus and Nathaniel met for the first time, Jesus said that before they had even met, he had seen Nathaniel under a fig tree before Philip had even told Nathaniel about him
 - And then Nathaniel was truly impressed
 - This Jesus of Nazareth seemed to have miraculous powers of vision and insight!
 - But Jesus brushed that aside essentially saying to him, "You ain't seen nothing yet!"
 - Then Jesus said something strange: "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. [John 1:51]"
 - That sounds strange – very strange until we remember the Old Testament story of Jacob's ladder
 - And in his dream, Jacob saw angels going up and down on a stairway to the place where he was sleeping – and when he woke up, Jacob declared that this place was holy ground because this was a sacred place where God's heaven touched the earth through the angels of God
 - But in today's gospel, the angels do not go up and down to place – they go up and down to JESUS, and so Jesus himself is Holy
 - Jesus is the living connection between heaven and earth
 - Jesus, the Son of God, born in obscure little Nazareth is the connection between God and Nathaniel and the whole rest of humanity
 - And Jesus is also OUR connection to heaven and to God too!
- There is no place too obscure or small for Jesus
 - We don't have to live in Washington DC or New York, New York for God to find us
 - We don't have to live in Geneva or Jerusalem for God to find us
 - We don't have to travel to some Holy City or a sacred place to meet God – instead Jesus is THE HOLY ONE
 - And Jesus not only finds us wherever we live, Jesus the holy Son of God saves us

- At the end of gospel stories Jesus was crucified, and then he was raised
- By the end of the written gospels, the rest of the story of God's heavenly work continues in the work of God through the risen Christ who calls and continues to make disciples
- No place is too obscure, and each one of you... each one of us has already been found and loved by Jesus
- Through our baptism into Christ, through the Lord's Supper that we will share when it is warmer, through the Word of God that when it is heard plants faith within us, through God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, One God, we are sought out, found, and connected to the one on whom the angels of heaven ascend and descend, so that we may share his forgiveness, his life, and his kingdom, not only in the future, but here in this world and life... even in a parking lot during an historic pandemic!