

Guest Preacher - Rev. Donald M Macleod

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Date: 28 May 2023

Preacher: Rev. Donald M. Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's, for a short time, turn back to the chapter we had, John chapter 14. John chapter 14. I should have said at the start, a special welcome if you're visiting with us today.

Of course, I'm not sure. Some faces, I know most faces, but some faces, I think you're visiting with us. Would you pray that you'd know the Lord's blessing in your time with us, and you'd leave this place having either grown in your love of him, or having perhaps met him for the first time.

John 14. We take verse 9 as our text. John 14, verse 9. Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father? However, in our short time together this morning, quite a big task ahead of us.

Our hope is, in our short time, we're going to take a very broad look at the life of Philip. The life of one of the apostles, one of the disciples, one of the followers of Jesus.

[1 : 17] Now, when you start looking at the life of Philip, you see that actually, he hasn't talked about all that much. In the synoptics in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, these Gospels, Philip only gets a passing mention.

It's only really in John we see the majority of Philip's life being talked about, who he was and what he did. Unlike the other, or some, of the other disciples, we see more of our background, we hear more of our stories.

With Philip, we only really see him mentioned about three or four times. We first, of course, see his conversion. We'll start off with that in a second. We see his conversion. We then see a few interactions, about three or four interactions.

Then, after John 14, we see Philip once more, and that's in Acts, and we'll see that more later on. The harsh reality is that the little we do see of Philip, the little we do hear of this apostle, this man who loved Jesus and who followed Jesus, the little we see and the little we know could be summarized, perhaps quite harshly, into two headings.

Philip seems to have quite a small faith and quite a little bit of understanding. So, small faith and little understanding.

[2 : 44] You think, well, it's a bit harsh, perhaps, for us to call and describe poor Philip that way, but as we go on, we see that the reality is he did truly have a small faith. At times, an incredibly small faith.

At times, he does have such a small, such a little understanding. To help us summarize a whole man's life, we take two very broad points.

First of all, looking at the call of Philip, his call, and then seeing the confusions of Philip. So, the call of Philip, then the confusions of Philip.

Being realistic, we all know, those of us who are Christians, we've sat in many church services over the years before we were saved, and you've sat, and you've counted, I was going to say, you've counted the tiles, there's nothing to count, you've counted the blinds, you've counted the panels, you've counted the seats, you've looked at your watch, you've measured out your sweets.

For those here today, I'm being honest, I'm being realistic. For those here today, who perhaps, you're here to, out of routine, you're here, perhaps, to keep a loved one happy.

[3 : 55] Perhaps you're here, and you do care about wanting to know more about Jesus. Let's begin with our end. What do we want to hear from God's Word today?

If nothing else, then please listen to this. Nothing else, please listen to this. The life of Philip shows us, the person of Philip, that shows us that this man, who has such a small faith, and such a little understanding.

At times, he messes things up incredibly. He says things which are so silly. Jesus still loves Philip.

Jesus still makes full use of the life and service of Philip. If you're here today, you think, I could never be a Christian. I don't know enough.

I don't understand enough. I don't know my Bible well enough. Perhaps, I don't know my Bible at all. I don't know all the theology, all the church history.

[4 : 58] I don't know all the bits and pieces that the church does. Philip, I am willing to bet, knew you at times, less than anyone here. But still, he is loved and kept by Jesus.

Having little knowledge and having little faith is no barrier to coming and loving Jesus for yourself. To the Christians here today, brothers and sisters, there are times, if we're honest, when our own faith feels so small.

When you think, for all the years of your life, all perhaps your years of service to the Lord, you know less now than you did when you first started. Jesus, our Savior, uses people of small faith and little understanding.

If we're honest, myself very much included, I find myself agreeing and praising the Lord for that reality. So first of all, the call of Philip, because we see that in chapter 1, the first chapter we read, chapter 1 of John, John 1 verses 40 down to verse 51, where we saw the call of Philip.

Now we've actually covered this before, a few years ago together, we looked at the call of these two men, Philip and Nathanael, but just very briefly, just two things to note about the call of Philip.

[6 : 25] John 1 verses 43 down to verse 51. We can see, first of all, that when Jesus called Philip to follow him, that call was immediate.

It was immediate. John 1 verse 43. The next day, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, follow me.

He found Philip. Jesus is always intentional. Every place our Lord went in his time on earth, he went with our reason.

He decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip. Jesus, from eternity past, would meet Philip and planned to meet Philip on that day, at that time.

As he meets Philip face to face, the Lord calls to Philip the simple instruction, follow me. Philip's call is immediate.

[7 : 33] He immediately knows who this man is, who this Savior is. We see in a second that Philip has done the research. We'll see this more in a wee minute.

He's done the research. He knows there is a Savior coming. He knows there is a Savior for the people who are lost in sin. He knows that God has promised to send one who would save his people.

And the second Philip comes face to face to this man. When Jesus calls Philip to follow him, Philip responds immediately. His faith is so strong here, so apparent here, without a second thought as to who he is or what he's doing.

When he comes face to face with Jesus and Jesus says, follow me, Philip follows immediately. His call is immediate. But also, his call makes him evangelical.

The call makes him evangelical. Verse 45, Philip found Nathanael and said to him, we have found him of whom Moses and the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

[8 : 46] And of course, we see the perhaps sarcastic question, at least the confused question from Nathanael, his friend. Nathanael said to him, can anything good come out of Nazareth?

Philip said to him, come and see. We found him, Philip. Philip says, Nathanael, we found him. The one we talked about, the one we waited for, the saviour, the messiah.

We've been reading and waiting and reading and waiting and reading and waiting and finally he's here. Jesus is here. The messiah is here. His faith is so big.

He is so full of faith and trust in the Lord. He is willing to straight away point his friend toward Jesus. And just as Jesus finds Philip, the same wording here is used, isn't it?

That Philip then goes to find Nathanael. Philip doesn't try and teach or convince Nathanael. As Philip is faced with this almost sarcastic question from his friend.

[9 : 54] Can anything good come out of Nazareth? That small town of farmers, that small town of crofters, can anything good come out of Nazareth? Philip doesn't try and use his reason, use his brains.

He doesn't try and argue with great theological importance. No, he does the simple reality, the simple truth, come and see.

Nathanael, come and see for yourself. Philip is so strong in his faith, he is so strong in his trust in Jesus, he says to his friend, his questioning friend, see for yourself.

I've told you about him, come and meet him yourself and see for yourself how he answers all your questions. Philip knows very little at the start.

What he does know is he knows Nathanael has to meet with Jesus. Nathanael has to see Jesus for himself. He knows that Nathanael had to be directed towards Jesus.

[11:05] Philip starts off quite strong, doesn't he? Starts off with an immediate faith in Jesus. Starts off with this immediate evangelical desire to see his friends come to know Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, if we're being very honest, and I hope we are honest at least to ourselves this morning. Brothers and sisters, we think back perhaps to when we were first saved, to when you first encountered the living Lord Jesus, how full of zeal we were, how full of excitement we were, and perhaps and I won't include everyone, but perhaps many here, in the years since we have lost that. We've lost that zeal. We've lost that excitement to our shame. We've lost that excitement. We've lost the reality of what it is to know and to love our first love. At the start we were perhaps quite evangelical.

We were quite happy to talk openly and freely about Jesus, but in the years since we've lost some of that. The next time we see Philip we see his faith is quite a bit smaller.

His understanding hasn't seemed to have grown all that much. Here we see the confusion of Philip. Just three examples. Three examples of times where Philip shows himself to be of little understanding and of little faith.

[12:31] And we can see that in Philip's lack of understanding and Philip's lack of faith, we can be encouraged, hopefully, as we see ourselves in the life of Philip. The first time we see this lack of understanding, this lack of faith, is in John 6.

See the feeding, of course, of the 5,000. We know the account, but to summarize, of course, Jesus is there and he's seeing the crowd come toward him. And there's this crowd of thousands of people, 5,000 men, many more women and children.

This massive crowd is gathered. And Jesus asks the question of Philip. Verse 5, lifting up his eyes, Jesus, Jesus, lifting up his eyes and seeing a large crowd is coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?

Where are we to buy bread so these thousands of people may eat? Verse 6 then tells us. Jesus said this to test him, to test Philip, for he himself knew what he would do.

Philip answered him, 200 denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a litter. Massive crowd.

[13:55] Jesus asked Philip, whose faith was once so strong. Philip, who had seen Jesus perform great miracles up to this point, he's seen healings, he's seen miracles, he's heard Jesus teaching day by day by day.

And Jesus asked Philip this simple question. How do we feed the crowd? Philip, how do we feed this massive crowd? Jesus did this to test him, we see in verse 6.

Poor Philip. He answers, perhaps as we would, when faced with a question, an impossible question, Philip starts doing the maths. He starts doing the maths pretty quickly.

He works out how much bread would be needed for the crowd of his size, how much it would cost them, and he realises very quickly, they can't afford that. They can't afford to feed thousands of people.

There's no money, there's no time, there's no ability. And you can hear the panic in Philip's voice. 200 and that I would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.

[15:10] He's seen the miracles, he's heard the teaching, he has seen Jesus do and say things, he has met the living Lord Jesus. And the second he is faced with a challenge, and he can't begin to understand how to cope with, poor Philip crumbles back to his own understanding, doesn't he?

Jesus asks him, Philip, how do we feed the crowd? And Philip says, I don't know. I can't do it. We can't do it.

There's no money, there's no time, there's not enough bread for everyone. Philip gives what is a genuine, human answer.

It's an answer which shows he has lost his sight of who he is with. He is walking and serving alongside the Son of God. He is standing here, literally standing side by side with Jesus.

He has seen this man do miracles. He has seen this man say things which show again and again and prove again and again he is the Son of God of all the power of God himself.

[16:24] And poor Philip, he crumbles. A simple question is asked. All Philip had to say was, Lord, I don't know, but you do. Lord, I can do it, but you can.

We think, Philip, what a disaster. What a disaster this man is. What embarrassment. I'll probably go too harsh and too far that way.

Let's stop and think for ourselves. Think of the last challenge you and I faced in life. The last time we felt, I can't do this. Life is too hard.

I cannot do this. This situation is so beyond my ability. It's so beyond what I can do. With that time where you find yourself like poor Philip, crumbling to pieces.

I can't do it. I don't have the answers. I don't have the ability. I don't have the money. I don't have the sense. And like Philip, we find ourselves very quickly forgetting that we walk alongside the living Lord Jesus who has done all the miracles, who saved us, who created and sustains the whole universe.

[17:36] All things were made through him and made for him. And we forget. We forget so quickly that he is walking alongside us, that he is keeping us.

And like poor Philip, when faced with an impossible question, we turn to ourselves. We panic. We forget who he is. Everything will seem impossible to us, dear brothers and sisters, as long as we look to ourselves.

The second we look to Jesus, we see that the things which are impossible are not impossible. Not at all. How do you reach Barvis, this district as a whole?

Of all the homes today, all the many hundreds of people who have no idea who Jesus is, who have no gospel knowledge, our own family members who we love so much, our friends who we love so much, who at this moment are going to lost eternity, who have no care for their souls.

How do we save them? How do we help them? How do we save Barvis? Barvis? Well, note the problem, much like Philip, the problem's in the question.

[18:48] Problem's in the answer we give to the question. We don't do anything. He does the work. What we do, and what we should, or are called to do, is to bring these problems, these worries to him.

Again and again, bring them to him. Lord, we long to see this community come to know Jesus. We long to see this building and the Church Scotland full. We can't do it, Lord, but you can.

We long to see our parents and our children, our spouses, our family members, our friends come to know Jesus. Lord, I can't do it, but you can.

Philip learns this day, at least Philip should have learned this day, that he can't do it, but Jesus certainly can. Second confusion we see of poor Philip is in John chapter 12.

John 12, we see this quite quick encounter really, where some, John 12, verse 20, I'll just read for us. John 12, verse 20, this segment where some Greeks have come to see Jesus.

[19:58] John 12, verse 20, Greeks have come to see Jesus, and the Greeks come to Philip, verse 21, and ask him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus. Now, we can say, and this is speculation, perhaps they come to Philip because Philip's name is a Greek name, a Greek sounding name perhaps.

But either way, these Greeks come to Philip. Why is this so important? Well, this is the first time we see, as it were, the Gentiles, the non-Jewish people seeking out Jesus.

At least we see it recorded for us here. And Philip is faced with this situation. He's never faced this before. There are men here who aren't Jews, who aren't from his background, his culture, and they want to see Jesus.

And poor Philip, yet again we see him panicking. This is Philip who brought Nathaniel to Jesus without thinking twice, who as a brand new Christian, minutes old, brings Nathaniel to Jesus.

Here we see him perhaps some years on. And as these Greeks come to Philip, as they ask him the beautiful, simple question, and do you know what, brothers and sisters, this is a question that's printed on this bit of wood in front of me.

[21:14] This is a question your minister, your accession has printed in this pulpit. Sir, we would see Jesus. The simple, beautiful question. And faced with a simple chance to bring these men to Jesus.

Poor Philip, he crumbles yet again. Philip went and told Andrew. And Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

They came to Philip. Philip panics and goes to Andrew. The disciples had, as it were, equal access to Jesus. They all had access to him at this point.

But Philip, when faced with someone and something outside where he knows he can't handle it very well. The challenge for us here is, are we as flexible or perhaps inflexible as Peter is, as Philip was, sorry.

Philip was not flexible at all. As we seek to reach out, as you seek to reach out to this community. And for the first time I've come here to today, these 10 or 11 years on, this church has grown.

[22 : 26] And we praise the Lord for that. But our faces here today, I haven't seen, I didn't see at the start. I've seen over the years, you've come here and you've professed faith some and you've grown to love the Lord and we praise the Lord for that.

But there are many more in this community who don't know Jesus. Are we ready, as it were, to be flexible? No, never flexible in the truth we preach, the truth we teach.

Never. But second we do that, we decline. We see that in our own churches. We see that in our own nation. The churches and denominations which become flexible on the scriptural truth often build for a while, but then they decline with no help and no saving them, humanly anyway.

We must never be flexible on the truth, but we must always be flexible on how we share that truth.

As we're preaching to the choir here, I know as a congregation you are doing that and seeking to do that quite well.

You do have meaningful attempts to reach out to this community. community. And this is a challenge not just to you, it's a challenge to every congregation, my own included.

[23 : 44] We pray that we see more people come to church. We pray we see more people come to Jesus. But let's not be like Philip, that when they come to church, when they come to Jesus, we then don't know what to do with them.

Let's be ready to be willing to welcome them in, those from outside our culture, those who have moved to this place from various backgrounds. The reality is the Lord has brought them here for a purpose.

And perhaps that purpose is they have come to know Jesus and come to love Jesus for themselves. Very briefly we come to the third and final example of the confusion of poor Philip.

The chapter we read in John chapter 14. Here we see Philip has truly little understanding. John 14, we have reality here that this is the last hours Jesus has with the disciples.

The last hours he has with his friends. They're here as in the upper room. He is leaving them soon. He'll be murdered soon. He'll be captured, tortured horrifically, murdered painfully, hung on that cross to die and suffocate slowly soon.

[24 : 59] soon. Here he is giving words of encouragement to the disciples. Words we read in that first section of John 14.

The promise that he will soon take us home. I prepared a place for you. In my father's house are many rooms. And you know the way to where I am going.

We then see of course poor Thomas questioning where is the way, how do we get where you're going and Jesus assures them once more gently. And Jesus as he assures the disciples, he reminds them once more who he is.

That he and the father, they are one. He is sent from the father, they are one. One God and three persons. And Jesus is reminding them just who he is and the power of who he is.

That he has come as a son to do the will of the father. As he seeks to comfort them, as Jesus comforts these friends, we then see Philip pipe up once more.

[26 : 08] And this time, yet again, Philip sticks his foot right in it. Verse 8. From hearing of the comfort of Jesus, and of the peace and reassurance of Jesus, for Jesus reminding them that he and the father are one.

Then Philip says, verse 8, Lord, show us the father, and it's enough for us. He has not been listening. He hasn't heard a word that's been said.

Show us the father, that'll do us, that's enough for us. That'll keep us going. So, he doesn't realize what he's saying perhaps, but by saying that, he is diminishing the authority and the person of Jesus himself.

Jesus said, I and the father are one. He who knows me knows the father. Philip says, show us the father then. You're going away, you say, but show us the father, that'll keep us going, that'll do us. Again, poor Philip, he means well. He means well perhaps. But he hasn't been listening. He doesn't get it. How heartbreaking this is.

[27 : 19] And we can see, and we can read and hear the pain of our Savior as he answers Philip back. Jesus said to him, Jesus said to Philip, have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip?

Philip? You still don't understand, Philip. I've told you again and again. I'm comforting you here. I am giving you assurance here and you aren't listening to me.

Whoever has seen me has seen the father. How can you say, show us the father? brothers and sisters, sometimes we know very much.

Many of us here, we do know an awful lot. but we understand so very little. So very little. It's a danger for those of us who've been on the walk perhaps longer than others.

You think perhaps for your years of following the Lord. It often is a problem also for those of us who are younger in our faith. We equate knowledge with understanding.

[28 : 34] You can know your scriptures off by heart and praise the Lord, we should strive for that. You should know your theology off by heart and praise the Lord, we should strive for that. But not for a second think that four years of assembly training, not for a second think that all the books we can read gives us understanding if we don't actually spend time with the Lord.

We can know much, understand so very little. What we learn from Philip is that we can never know, as it were, too much about Jesus.

Never know too much about Jesus to actually listen to him. To actually listen to him. Poor Philip. He started off so promising, didn't he?

He started off so good. We think, man, time after time after time again, this man seems to make a disaster wrong things. He does the wrong thing. He says the wrong thing.

And it goes quiet for a while. We see no more mention of Philip for a few chapters. And Philip then pops up one more time. The apostle Philip, the disciple Philip pops up one more time.

[29 : 52] This time in Acts chapter one. Acts chapter one. Verse 12 and verse 13.

Just one simple mention. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room where they were staying. Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas son of James.

And all these with one accord were devoting himself to prayer together with the woman and Mary the mother of Jesus and his brother. He had made a mess of things.

He had at times shown little understanding and little faith. But where do we see Jesus? Philip, sorry. We see him still following Jesus.

We see him here. Christ has ascended back to the Father and we see Philip numbered and named with the rest of the disciples. Yes, he has at times said things and done things, but you're thinking, Philip, don't say that, don't think that.

[31 : 08] If we're honest, brothers and sisters, if we're very honest, do we not see in Philip so much of ourselves? Years of understanding and somehow we still understand so little.

Years of learning at times we still have learned so little. years of gospel preaching and at times you think I've just taken in so little. Years of service at times you think I have served so little.

But yet, but yet, he is kept and known and loved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Philip was used to serve to serve him. We don't know truly from Scripture, we have to go to secular sources, but we know from history, or we're told from history, Philip was martyred.

He died as a martyr. He died serving his Lord. For all his lacking, for all his lack of ability and understanding and knowledge, he lived a life of faithful service to his Lord, and died serving his Lord.

[32 : 26] Died fearlessly serving his Lord. Brothers and sisters, Jesus keeps us. Jesus keeps us at times when we find our faith so small.

Jesus keeps us when we find ourselves understanding so little about him. Why? Because Jesus set his love on his people. And his love is not conditional. Those who he sets his love on, he keeps his love on.

He's a covenant keeping God who loves his people from all time and to all time. That's an encouragement this week. We seek to serve the Lord and barb us in our homes.

We serve a Lord who uses small faith, who uses little understanding, who uses us even when we find ourselves so useless in our service, in our love, in our faith.

He still uses us. One last reminder to those here who as of yet, and we say that carefully, who as of yet, you don't know Jesus. You can't say you love him. Don't let lack of understanding stop you coming to know him.

[33 : 33] It is not big understanding or big faith the Lord requires. We saw with Philip, he is able to use and greatly use small understanding and small faith.

You take that small faith you might have, that small understanding you might have, you take that to Jesus. Lord, I don't know much about you. Jesus, I don't understand half the things the minister says week to week.

I read the Bible, I don't understand any of it, but I know that you're a saviour and I know that I need saving. Take that in prayer. Pray simply like that. Use your own words to him and he promises that he will listen to those that cry out to him.

He won't ignore you. Even with small faith and small understanding, he will save the ones that cry out to him. Let's bow our heads now, a word of prayer. Lord, we thank you for our time together this day.

We thank you Lord for this time of worship, the time around your word. We ask that you'd forgive anything that was said not in accordance to your word. I give you praise that the power is not in the preacher Lord.

[34 : 40] The power is in you and in you alone as you speak and move and work through your living word. Lord, once more, bless our time together. Bless this congregation. Lord, we ask you to bless the one who leads in worship.

We ask for all those who lead in worship week after week. Lord, they would know that they're serving you in that great act of service. And they lift up their voices to praise our heavenly God. praise you, the God who saves people from all our disaster and all our sin and all our backsliding. You're a faithful God who's faithful even when we are not. Ask all these things in and through and for Jesus. His name is sake. Amen. Let's bring our time to conclusion by singing to God's praise from Psalm 27.

Psalm 27. I'll sing Psalms, Psalm 27, page 31. Psalm 27 on page 31. The Lord's my Savior and my light, who will make me dismayed.

The Lord's the stronghold of my life. Why should I be afraid when evildoers threaten me to take my life away? My adversaries and my foes will stumble in that day.

[35 : 53] Psalm 27, verse 1 to 6. To God's praise. The Lord's my Savior and my light, who will make me dismayed.

The Lord's the stronghold of my life. Why should I be afraid?

When evil doers that doers that tend me to take my life away?

My adversaries and my foes will stumble in that day.

Although an army hems me in, my heart will feel no dread.

[37 : 12] Though war against me should arise, I will lift up my head.

One thing I'll plead before the Lord, and this I'll seek always, that I may come within God's house and dwell there all my days, that on the beauty of the Lord I constantly make his, and in his house may seek to know direction in his ways.

For in his dwelling he will keep me safe in troubled days.

Within his tent he'll shelter me, and on a rock me raise.

My head will then be lifted high above my enemies, and in his tent I'll sacrifice with shouts of joy and praise.

[39 : 31] May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit for you now and forevermore. Amen.