In the same chapter the gospel of John moves from the sublime, “The word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth” to the mundane, “Jesus found Phillip.” This move from metaphorically glorious language to statements of simple fact is, in fact, the rhythm of faith. At times our faith is something that surges past our senses as our hearts beat in rapturous love and praise to God and, at others, it is as repetitive as brushing our teeth.

And we need both. Without the everyday routine of faith our souls would rot as surely as our teeth would, but who could ever imagine a life which consisted entirely of brushing their teeth!

We encounter God’s son as Jesus, the simple carpenter, and as Christ, the eternal word of God. Though one type of encounter, at first glance, might seem to have greater impact, the ordinary encounter Philipp has with Jesus, in fact, has eternal reverberations. Philipp’s life is completely and irrevocably changed.

Think for a moment what these words mean, Jesus found Phillip.

For example, imagine what it was like for Rita Chretien when she was found after being lost for 7 weeks in the Nevada wilderness as winter set in. Each day grew colder as her meager supply of trail mix disappeared. She lost 30 pounds and every day was a day closer to starvation or a freezing death. Being found in such circumstances creates the biggest change of emotions imaginable. Think what it must have been like. One moment, as the cold seeps deeper into her bones the prospect of death looms ever closer and a split second later that feeling is completely washed away as hope is realized. Being found is finding life.

The Greek word used in John’s gospel for found, ἐὑρίσκω, has a familiar ring to it. Prospects in Gold Rush times shouted “Eureka!” when a gold nugget changed their lives’ fortunes forever. For Phillip being found by Jesus was a Eureka moment – even if he did not realize it at the time.

Jesus, who came down from heaven with a mission to save the world, to die for our sins, took time to seek out one person. Not someone with key contacts or special talents. Jesus, who must have had the fullest schedule of anyone in history for the three years of his ministry, for some reason sought one particular person.

And what does this mean for Phillip. Jesus found him. Remember Jesus himself uses “found” language in the parable of the prodigal son, “he was lost and now is found!”

Being found implies being lost something like Mrs. Chretien in the wilderness or those sad “Lost and Found” bins – usually a collection of worn-out jackets, sweatshirts, phone chargers, and other random items. Each item has a story. It belonged to someone. Kept the cold away or helped keep someone connected to his or her loved ones. In some ways Haiti seems like one of these forgotten items. The once lovely country, filled with natural beauty and promise, still bears the scars of the earthquakes, colonialism, and internal corruption.

All our souls are so lost. It is the fundamental human condition. Saint Augustine said, “Our hearts are restless until we find our rest in thee.” But, in fact, they are not merely restless. They are lost and cannot find their way back. This is why the good shepherd goes and finds the one sheep. He knows it will not, it cannot, wander back on its own. This is why Jesus came down to earth to give His life – to find you and to find me.

Think about those times in life when you felt lost. It feels like it will last forever. Like Mrs.
Chretien, you didn't know which direction you were headed in. Your soul was so disoriented that it would have been impossible to find your own way home. And so you took it out on your spouse or the person behind the cash register or your children or yourself. You weren't the person you knew you should be.

For many things, being lost is a permanent condition. The vast majority of these care-worn items in the lost and found bins are never found. They are forever lost and forgotten. But not Phillip.

For Phillip this means he will never be lost again! Never, ever, ever.

Being found is a moment of sublime peace and clarity. Anxiety leaves your pours and a cancer on your soul is gone. Suddenly, you find you're actually sleeping at night. No more deep worries about finances, the kids, or rumors around town. The challenges don't disappear, but they lose power over you because the One who has the whole world in His hands now has gotten hold of you. It is not unlike that moment you feel like the flu has finally left your body. As the poison seeps out, a sense of warmth envelopes you that enables a truly deep, restful sleep to occur.

To be found by Christ is to find life, meaning, and purpose. As Phillip comes to know our Lord, it prompts him to immediately work to find others. He has been found by our Lord and so finds purpose in his life.

We are told he finds Nathanael and tells him we have found the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote. But Nathanael is doubtful. As he says “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael is not so easily convinced. He is still lost.

As individuals, we cannot find people for Christ but we can make them curious enough to stop their wandering long enough that they will meet Him face to face, which is what happened for Nathanael.

Jesus and Nathanael have a conversation. Even though Jesus was not present for Nathanael's sarcastic remark, somehow Jesus just knows about it. That miraculous knowledge was proof enough and so Nathanael believed saying, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God!”

But this seems a rather cheap or shallow reason for Nathanael to believe, a parlor trick that proves Jesus is Lord. Being found by Christ is something more transformative than belief in a divine magician.

Think for a moment on your own reasons for belief. Perhaps you believe to squelch the fear of extinction, the snuffing out of the light of your being, forever. It may be that innate fear of nothingness that leads you to call on Jesus’ name. And though He has compassion for our fears, ultimately that is not a good enough reason.

Our goal is not simply to live forever. That was the mistake of Tithonus of Greek myth. He was granted eternal life but not eternal youth.

Alfred Tennyson wrote a poem entitled Tithonus, and in a few lines captures the sorrow and emptiness of simple eternal existence

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me (Tithonus) only cruel immortality Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream

Mere existence is a shadowy dream compared to the life God intends for us. So our reasons for belief matter as much as the belief itself. Belief for the sole purpose of eternal existence or mere acknowledgment of Jesus’ superpowers does not lead to the joy of being found. You want to live forever, but have you considered if it’s a life worth living without end, ever, ever, ever?

We should not offer our belief, our integrity for something so cheap as mere conformity with family and friends, or even eternal life. The
integrity of our belief is the only thing in this life that is truly ours. We should not give because it is the easy thing to do, because some preacher said it or because we are afraid, or because it’s what we have always done.

History is riddled with dark moments in which people sold their integrity to conform out of fear. Mao’s China, Hitler’s Germany, or Stalin’s Russia all bought a great lie and the people gave themselves over to it, gave their belief, gave their devotion to these lies not to find something of great value but to soothe momentary fears and, because of it, they became more lost than ever.

We should only give our integrity of belief for something of inestimable value. Jesus calls it the pearl of great price. The man is willing to give up everything to obtain it. But don’t fool yourself. Though we know this gift of life with God is of infinite value, we don’t truly know anything about it. Not really. It is beyond the reach of the human mind.

So don’t choose it because you think you know what it will be like. Rather embrace it because of the One who found you. Remember when you were a little child and your mother wanted to take you to some new place. You balked at first, but when she reached out your hand you took hold of it. You let her lead because you trusted her. That is the faith of a child. When you are found, let Christ lead and you will find something new and perhaps even strange but you will find it is worth giving over your very soul.