

# ***My Name is Phillip***

(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – John 12:20-33)

Giddy, my name is Phillip, my mates call be Phil. I have been working with and following Jesus for about three years.

I come from a town called Bethsaida, a town on the Sea of Galilee, the same place where Simon and Andrew are from. They were the first ones Jesus called to follow him, followed by James and John. Then there was me and I went and told a friend of mine, Nathanael, about Jesus, told him to come and see the one who I thought could change the world.

Anyway, when he called me to follow him, I could do nothing else, so have been on this journey for about three years. I have seen Jesus do some amazing things, I have listened to his teaching, and I have seen the following he is getting, and also the trouble that always seems just around the corner. You might have heard of me; I was the one Jesus asked how much food would it take to feed a crowd of about five thousand. Told, him so much, there was no way we could provide for them all – how wrong was I.

I have no idea why my parents called me Philip, was a bit odd given it is a Greek name – means lover of horses I understand.

It was getting close to the Passover, and it seemed everyone for all over the globe was in Jerusalem. Jesus had just raised his dear friend Lazarus, and let me tell you, this caused a bit of controversy. Those who opposed Jesus, mainly the Jewish religious teachers, were starting to think about what to do about Jesus and the people he was attracting, you see they didn't like some of what he had to say. I even heard them say – look the whole world has gone after him. (John 12:19)

During the festival I was approached by some Greek men, guess they heard someone call my name, and because I have a Greek name, they assumed I was Greek. Luckily, I had picked up a few Greek words so at least we could understand each other a bit. They wanted to see Jesus, so I took them to Andrew and together we took them to see Jesus.

Now it was not unusual for Greeks to be in Jerusalem for a festival. Jesus' reputation had preceded him and many knew about him and his activities and to be honest were intrigued by him. Some Greeks were known as 'God-fearers', they were interested in 'God matters', so I guess that is what they were.

So, we took them to Jesus and thought it would just be a simple meet and greet and everyone would be on their way. No, Jesus had a few things to say and not just to these Greek fellas. It was like he didn't want people to just see him, like some sideshow exhibit, he didn't just want people to see what miracle he might perform, he wanted them to truly understand what it meant to see him. It was like he wanted to paint a picture for all of us about what was happening now and what would happen next. He was talking to us all, so I thought I probably should sit up and listen.

Jesus was in good form and typically cryptic. He talked about how his hour had come. He had often used this kind of language, at Cana he said his hour hadn't come, now he was saying it had. Was never sure what any of this meant, he talked about being

glorified, not sure how that was going to happen given the opposition to him that was building. Then he told a mini parable, about grains of wheat and dying in order to bear fruit – had to really think about what that meant. I'm not much of a gardener, but when you want to grow something edible, or even something pretty you bury the seed in the ground and in time it will shoot and bring forth produce. Then he seemed to link this image with following and serving, losing life and finding life, really couldn't make sense of what he was saying. But he went on talked about feeling troubled, pondering if he should ask the creator to save him from this hour, back to this idea of 'the hour' again.

Then we all heard something, like a clap of thunder, a voice which seemed to be saying something about glory. Now I was really confused, and quite unsure of what was going on.

Then there was silence and Jesus was speaking again, talking about being lifted up, drawing all people to him.

I really had to work hard at understanding what this was all about.

I knew about following Jesus and serving him, after all I had been doing that for the last three years, but it seemed like Jesus was saying something more than just accompanying him on the journey as he travelled around the countryside. What was going to happen next? Where was this journey with Jesus leading? What was he expecting us to do? What were we going to have to do to bear fruit in our following, what did he really mean by a grain of wheat must die to bear fruit. Surely not, surely, he wasn't going to die, surely were weren't going to die.

Being lifted up, what could that mean? I knew about Moses lifting up a serpent and how those who gazed on it were healed. What did this mean? Would Jesus be lifted up? How? Would gazing upon him lead to the healing of people?

Drawing all people to himself, well I heard that before, that is what the Pharisees were afraid of. They were worried that Jesus was drawing the whole world to him. It seemed to them that the whole world was following after him and that really freaked them out. That was scaring them, and I knew they were starting to whisper and find ways to get rid of him. They were always trying to trap him up with the law, I assumed that was how they would get rid of or silence him.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing. I now know that Jesus was talking about his crucifixion and death and what would follow after that. I now know that following in Jesus' footsteps is not an easy task, but I can do nothing else. I believe his life, death and resurrection really did change the world and show us all how to live lives of peace, love and acceptance, just wish more would share in that understanding.

My name is Phillip and I have lived an extraordinary life. Amen.