

John 1:43-51  
Epiphany 2B  
Pastor Lauren Dow Wegner

On a hot Saturday in August of the year 2000,  
I moved onto campus as a freshman at Texas Lutheran University.  
I had talked to my new roommate on the phone once before move-in  
day.

She was from Colorado,  
And, like me, was entering college as a biology major.  
I would bring the mini-fridge,  
She would bring the microwave.  
I assumed we'd be great friends.

And on move-in day,  
As my parents and I schlepped my stuff into what would be my  
new home,  
I met my roommate--  
A soft-spoken,  
Kind person.  
On that day, I also met my suitemates,  
With whom my roommate and I would share a bathroom in  
the coming year.

Our suitemates were loud,  
Boisterous, even.  
They had come to TLU together from nearby San Antonio,  
Having known each other for several years in high school.  
One was named Courtney,  
And she was. . .a little much, to be honest.  
She was sarcastic,  
And way too personal having just met me.  
She had absolutely no filter.

Her thoughts spilled out of her mouth before she could catch them.

She was so very, very different from me.

I remember walking back to my room after meeting Courtney,

I was in a sort of daze,

Like I'd been in another world over there in my suitemates' room.

A world that was loud,

And jarring,

And totally not like my own room.

I assumed Courtney and I wouldn't really be friends.

She was so not my type!

But as happens in the beautiful alternate world of college life,

Especially when you live on campus,

In a matter of hours,

All of my assumptions about everyone were shattered.

I quickly learned that my roommate was very different from me,

And we weren't going to be best friends. . .

And that that was okay.

And I also quickly learned that Courtney really wasn't that different from me at all deep down.

And we were destined to be the best of friends.

Our years at TLU went by,

And Courtney and I lived together for all of them.

We were a pair whose friendship surprised a lot of people,  
It even surprised us.  
And, to this day, there is no shortage in our friendship of raw honesty,  
Laughter til it hurts,  
And deep connection between the two of us.

My assumptions were so wrong.

Here's the thing about assumptions—  
They aren't just about the one we are judging.  
They're also about ourselves.  
When we assume something about someone else,  
We are also assuming that we are right.

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”  
Nathanael asks Philip this question when he hears that the one  
about whom Moses and the prophets wrote has been found,  
And he is the son of Joseph of Nazareth.

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”  
It's a line I've always been drawn to when contemplating this Gospel  
text,  
Because it's not sugarcoated,  
It's harsh,  
And it wasn't omitted.

Nathanael makes an assumption about Jesus and his homeland,  
His family.  
And in just a few footsteps, though,  
He meets this Jesus,

And his assumptions are shattered.

“Can anything good come out of that land?

That hole of a place?”

Assumptions fly all around us,

Blasted on Twitter,

Spreading like wildfire on our social media feeds,

Pervading our nightly news.

And we, we make assumptions, too.

“Can anything good come out of this millennial generation?

Can anything good come out of the right wing? The  
left wing?

Can anything good come out of the west side?

The south side?

Can anything good come out of the churches that aren't ours?

Can anything good come out of this mess I've made?

Can anything good come out of my brokenness?

Can anything good come out of this pain?

Can anything good come out of death?

Out of the grave?

Can anything good come?

The assumptions we make can be some of the most revelatory markers  
of our sinfulness.

We judge.

We lob our ideas around like they are facts,

Like we are always right.

We love to assume.

Not all assumption is dangerous,

Or unhealthy,  
Or hurtful.  
But knowing the truth,  
Learning the truth,  
Is much more meaningful than assuming it.

When Jesus meets Nathanael,  
He speaks truth about him immediately.  
He knows Nathanael—  
Who he is—  
And Nathanael's assumptions are shattered.  
"You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" he exclaims.  
It is because Jesus knows Nathanael deeply and truly,  
That assumptions disappear.  
For it is in knowing and being known,  
In reaching out,  
And taking risks,  
And opening ourselves up to vulnerability—  
In this our assumptions crumble and fade.

This is what Jesus does,  
And what Jesus calls us to.  
Because Jesus assumes, too.  
He assumes a lot.  
Jesus assumes our sin.  
He takes it on.  
He carries it with him to a cross.  
He dies with it,  
And he rises in victory over it.

Jesus assumes our death,  
And in His death,  
    We more than assume—  
        We know and trust and believe—  
            Our freedom from the sinful assumptions of  
            others and of ourselves,  
            We assume life made new.

In water and Word,  
    Christ assumes our desperate nature,  
        Our need for cleansing and rebirth.  
And we assume Christ's salvation,  
    Christ's gift of forgiveness and mercy.

In our baptism,  
    The assumptions of Jesus are true,  
        And our assumptions are blown out of the water.

In bread and wine,  
    Christ assumes our longing hunger,  
        Our need to be broken of our assumptions and sinful  
        judgments.  
And we assume the unity of Christ,  
    The gift of forgiveness and mercy.

In Holy Communion,  
    The assumptions of Jesus are true,  
        And our assumptions are swallowed up in his body and  
        blood.

Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

Nathanael wasn't so sure.

And sometimes we aren't so sure, either—

Be it out of Nazareth,

Or our government,

Or our own minds and mouths.

Can anything good come?

But. . . "Come and see," Philip encourages.

"You will see greater things than these,"

Jesus proclaims.

Even when we can only assume the worst,

God in Christ always and only promises to show us the best.