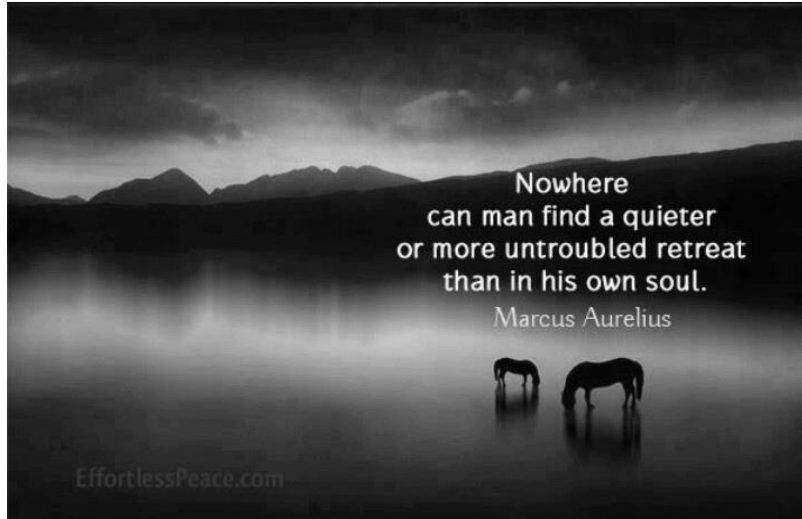


## HEALTHY SOUL SERIES: #1 SEARCHING YOUR SOUL?



**Scripture:**

**Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18**

<sup>1</sup>O LORD, you have searched me and known me. <sup>2</sup>You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. <sup>3</sup>You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. <sup>4</sup>Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely. <sup>5</sup>You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup>Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

<sup>13</sup>For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup>I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. <sup>15</sup>My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. <sup>16</sup>Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed. <sup>17</sup>How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! <sup>18</sup>I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end - I am still with you.

**John 1:43-51**

<sup>43</sup>The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." <sup>44</sup>Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup>Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." <sup>46</sup>Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." <sup>47</sup>When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" <sup>48</sup>Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." <sup>49</sup>Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" <sup>50</sup>Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." <sup>51</sup>And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

**This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



## SEARCHING YOUR SOUL?

This is my first of a series of three sermons on the soul.

The soul is a mysterious thing that I will be exploring over the next two weeks.

Some say your soul is your “moral compass” giving you an instinct for right and wrong. What is the soul and how does one “Search your Soul”? The quote on page one is from: Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, who was born in 121 AD. This quote came from his journal writing called *Meditations*. Even though he was not a Christian, he believed in God and stoic philosophy. He said, “Nowhere can man find a quieter or more untroubled retreat than in his own soul.”

### THE SPIRIT AND ESSENCE OF A PERSON

**Wikipedia says: “Soul can be defined as the spirit and essence of a person. An example of your soul is the part of you that makes you who you are that will live on after your death. An example of soul is the part of you that will go to heaven and be immortal, according to the teachings of certain religions.”**

Soul is mentioned in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible two-hundred-two times. I created a list of some favorite scriptures to ponder about the soul.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word “nephesh,” is translated as “soul.” In Greek it is the word, “psyche,” defined as the seat of feelings, desires, affections and aversions. Psyche is also defined as breath and spirit. Rob Bell says, “You are an exotic cocktail of dust and soul, bone and spirit.”

### NATHANIEL

This John passage is unique in the Bible, not because it is a call story where Jesus is calling his first disciples, but this particular call involves a disrespectful response that transforms into deep reverence for Jesus because he knows Nathanael’s soul. Nathanael initially responded to Philip’s declaration with a disrespectful and skeptical reply: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

Later he regretted this derogatory comment because soon after he meets Jesus in person and hears that Jesus already knows him, Nathanael then replies: “Rabbi, Son of God, King of Israel!”.....

So why the skepticism at first? Why was Nathanael so skeptical and disrespectful of Philip which caused him to dismiss his declaration that he had met the one who fulfilled the law of Moses and the prophecies?

Philip was basically saying to Nathanael, “This is the Messiah, the one the Jews have been talking about ever since the days of Moses. This is who we have been waiting for the past fifteen-hundred years!”

But Nathanael just dismisses the idea that the Messiah could have arrived.

What would you do if your friend came up to you and said, “Let’s go follow this guy who is definitely the Second Coming of Jesus!” Would you pick yourself up and go? What if Jesus appeared to look like a Haitian or a Kenyan? How would you respond then?

Nathanael first responds with distrust of his friend Philip. And he also speaks like a bully about Jesus when he says, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

### ARROGANCE

I know what it’s like to be put down for where you came from. One time at a fancy dinner in George Washington’s Mt. Vernon home near Washington DC, a journalist for the Washington Post sat beside me. He started asking me questions and when it got around to “Where are you from?” I answered, “A small town in Iowa you have probably never heard of.” He gasped, “You are from Iowa?” I asked him why he was so surprised.

He replied, “I didn’t expect someone like you would be here from Iowa! So I asked him what he expected. “Overalls and a corn cob pipe in my mouth?” That ended our conversation that night. His arrogant prejudice was appalling!

### DISRESPECT

Our First Lady in the White House has said she is using her status to combat bullying. I would love to see her make an impact on bullying and to focus her campaign against the bullying of immigrants.

On behalf of my dear friends from Haiti and Kenya, I am deeply offended and upset about the

terrible disrespect of my precious resilient friends from Haiti and Kenya.

My closest friends in Kenya both received PhD's from Biola University in Los Angeles and returned to Kenya to teach and help those in poverty there. Remember when Rosemary Mbogo preached here two years ago? She shared her story about growing up without a father and still succeeding thanks to her faith in Jesus. Rosemary and Stephen Mbogo both teach at the University and manage the ByGrace orphanage outside of Nairobi. Stephen is the Executive Director of International African Enterprise. Both are intelligent, highly respected people here in the United States and in Kenya.

### **OUR HAITIAN FRIENDS**

And of course I feel protective of the family of our dear Nicolas whose memorial service is at 3:00 p.m. today, and church family member, Dieph, who is now studying in Miami. Dieph especially feels hurt by the comments from the White House against Haitians. I'm sure Dieph is also scared about losing his student visa to study here. He plans to use his degree to help Haiti.

God calls us to be like Philip and not agree with the disparaging assumptions made about others. We must stand up, protect, and advocate for our brothers and sisters who are victims of bullying wherever they are from, but especially when they are publicly disrespected in such a shameful manner.

### **PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

In today's passage, Nathanael quickly searched his soul and changed his mind after meeting Jesus in person. That happens too often. People tend to judge others based merely on assumptions, not on personal experience.

Those of us from my little town, Neola, were treated like those from Nazareth in today's story. Neola is a poor little town, tucked away in the country, off the beaten path.

There are many negative names for places like my little town: Backwoods, Hicksville, Dead end. When we played sports in Omaha or Des Moines, the city kids would trash talk and call us "country hicks" from the farm.

The world is filled with unlikely places like Nazareth where nothing much ever seems to happen, where there is no great university, not much commerce, places off the beaten path, tiny villages

where few people live but still thrive because they are good people. I am grateful to have grown up in my little town. People cared about each other and it felt safe.

Nathanael represents the "big city" attitude that prevails even more today. He speaks like the people of New York or London, Washington, DC or Singapore who believe those in the small towns are lesser than they are. How could anything good come from an Iowa farm town?

But our God is not a God of popularity and prestige. Jesus was not ashamed to come from Nazareth.

**And Philip stood by Jesus when he responded to Nathanael's prejudice by inviting him to "Come and see." That is a good response when someone is acting prejudicial. Introduce them to an authentic example of the people they are discriminating against to help them see their presumptions were wrong.**

The ambassador from Haiti, Paul Altidor, responded to last week's derogatory comments by saying, "I wish he would meet us and see we are not what he assumes." The ambassador from Haiti to the United States came here as a teenager, worked hard in school, went to Boston College, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and University of Paris in law and economics.

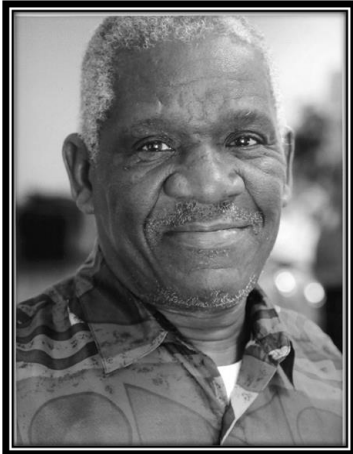
God upends human prejudice and overthrows our preconceptions with the real Jesus, someone we can all identify with as our Lord and Savior. He is someone who can see deep into our souls, and he forgives and loves us unconditionally anyway.

Jesus was able to see deep into Nathanael's soul and invited him to come and follow. Nathanael's soul learned to trust in Christ. How is Jesus calling your soul this year? Maybe you are called to search your soul for the courage to protect those around you being bullied. What can we do to help Phillippe feel safe here? Kay helps.

God searches our souls for the good in us and inspires us to do the same for others.

One way to nurture your soul is by making new friends from different backgrounds. You have an opportunity today. Consider coming back today for Nicolas' memorial service. His family is expecting

some of their Haitian friends to attend. I hope you will join in the celebration of Nicolas' life and honor him and his country with your presence.



**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen**



**Rev. Dr. Cindy Alloway  
Presbyterian Church of the Roses  
2500 Patio Court  
Santa Rosa, CA 95405**

**Benediction:**

**I'll close with a soul blessing adapted  
from a poem of John O Donohue**

***May the light of your soul guide you.  
May the light of your soul bless  
the work....***

***You do with the secret love and  
warmth of your heart.***

***May you see in what you do the beauty  
of your own soul.***

***May the sacredness of you bring healing,  
light and renewal to those.....***

***Who are with you and to those who  
see and receive you***

***May you be present in what you do.  
May evening find you gracious  
and fulfilled.***

***May you go into the night blessed,  
sheltered and protected.***

***May your soul calm, console  
and renew you.  
Amen***