



SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Second Sunday After Epiphany

January 17, 2021
Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace
www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org

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Pray:

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



Our aim today is to explore what it means to hear GOD calling us.

Samuel is clearly an incredibly special child. The first book of Samuel begins with the story of his parents – a so-far childless couple – Elkanah and Hannah. Hannah’s grief and her prayer for a son are described in chapter 1. She promises that, if GOD grants her request, ^she will dedicate him to the LORD.

1 Samuel 1: ¹¹She made this vow: ‘O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head.’ This touching story is played out against the

background of the corrupt and doomed priesthood of Eli and his sons. ^It begins with a stark but unsurprising observation about the rarity of words from GOD – Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. This was clearly a time of national decline.

Samuel, the much longed for son is sent in due course to serve at the Temple alongside Eli. The priesthood of Eli and his family seems to continue the fetid atmosphere at the time of the judges. Samuel's family is different and his dedication to GOD is clear. He fulfils his mother's vow, but we know little more about him at this stage – other than that he hears GOD speak to him 3 times without recognising GOD's voice. Eli still has the presence of mind to understand that it was GOD speaking. Samuel's Godly heritage and his unassuming innocence seem attractive prompts to the persistence of GOD calling His servant.

Unlike Samuel, Nathanael was found by Philip – whom JESUS Himself had found. Unlike Samuel, Nathanael is not full of innocence and youthful naivety. ^He even seems slightly cynical: ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see’ – but that doesn’t seem to put off Philip or JESUS. In fact, JESUS seems to appreciate his openness. Nathanael is open to listen and respond to the words of JESUS; and in this he resembles Samuel but not Jacob (otherwise known as Israel) who met GOD at Bethel. Jacob was a twister and schemer by nature. JESUS promises Nathanael that he will be blessed with even greater divine revelations – this time just like his ancestor, Jacob.



As we begin our journey through ordinary time – you will notice the colour of our robes has changed to green – the gospel begins with looking and gazing and responding to the call to discipleship. John the Baptist stands with 2 of his disciples, ready to decrease in personal significance

so that JESUS may increase. John watches JESUS pass by; the eyes of John's heart penetrate to the reality of this man – and he points Him out to his disciples as the Lamb of GOD. The Jewish religious experience of the lamb was as the sacrificial offering that overcame the alienation of sin and created unity between the people and GOD. In whatever way the Baptist's disciples understood his words, they were spoken with an urgency that made them leave John and follow JESUS. JESUS Himself turns and sees them. The word used in the original text for “sees them” has the sense of gazing contemplatively and engagingly at these 2 followers. JESUS then asks them His first question in the fourth gospel: “What are you looking for?” It is a question that will persist throughout this gospel, from this first chapter to the garden of the resurrection morning – but by then, the “What” has become the “Whom” in the intimate encounter of JESUS and Mary Magdalene. ^John 20:15 says: ¹⁵Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?’ Supposing him to

be the gardener, she said to him, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.’

The 2 disciples ask JESUS – the Teacher – the Rabbi – where He is staying; and He responds by inviting them to “Com and you will see.” Their question is about a place – their experience is about abiding for the rest of the day in a relationship with a person – about the beginning of a new communion between the people and this “Lamb of GOD”. The “where” is not as important as the “with whom”. The pattern of discipleship is established – through witness – of John the Baptist – others follow and experience JESUS’ truth for themselves. They, in turn, bring others to JESUS. One of the first 2 who followed JESUS remains anonymous – perhaps as an invitation from the Gospel writer to future readers to see a challenge to themselves in the following and seeking pattern of discipleship. The other one is later named as Andrew, who told his brother, Simon Peter, that he had found the Messiah. This gospel

proclaims that all discipleship is an active and involving relationship with JESUS – a following, seeking, staying, finding, and dialoguing with Him. We hear how each decision to follow JESUS is a response to a statement about JESUS' identity as Lamb of GOD, Rabbi (Teacher), Messiah – by people, whose ears and hearts are open to the Word of GOD, who hear His invitation through the words of a friend or stranger, through the events of joy or sorrow, or who can discern a moment of religious significance in the everyday.



Our readings today talk to us about the calling of GOD on our lives.

Samuel was a young boy who lived in a place where people come to worship GOD. Eli, the priest, looked after this place, looked after this place and Samuel helped him. Eli wasn't in a good place – he seemed to have given up on ever hearing GOD speak to him. Then, suddenly, and unexpectedly, GOD spoke – not to the priest, but to his apprentice. Samuel thought it was Eli.

It was three times before even the experienced Eli realised that it was GOD. So, we ALL need to be ready to listen!

^**Nathanael** had a proud Jewish background, was sceptical, but willing to give something a go. JESUS' first words to Nathanael have an immediate impact on him – JESUS knows him. This registers with Nathanael and he responds in making some amazing claims about JESUS which he could hardly have understood. He then went on to become one of JESUS' closest followers. Here is another person JESUS called – and maybe not the sort of person we would have expected to have mattered to JESUS!

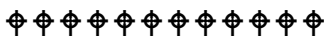
^**What about us?** How does GOD call us? We may be with others who were as thrilled about JESUS as Nathanael was; we may be helped by others to recognise GOD's voice as Eli did; OR, we may just be listening carefully, expecting GOD to speak. GOD speaks to all people, even the most unexpected, and is close to all people – just as our Psalm today emphasises. ^For

example, the first 2 verses tell us: “O Lord, you have searched me out and known me: you know when I sit or when I stand, you comprehend my thoughts long before. You discern my path and the places where I rest: you are acquainted with all my ways”. I have experienced GOD’s call on my life – and it took me a while to be sure of it. I had to speak to people more experienced in these matters than I before things began to fall into place. One of the most confirming comments came at my selection conference when one of the examining chaplains said to me that he had been waiting for me to finally answer GOD’s call. I have probably said this to you before, but we must be SILENT in order to LISTEN to GOD’s calling on our lives.

^The Words **SILENT** and **LISTEN** contain the same bunch of letters but are arranged differently.

So, let’s be **SILENT**

so, we can **LISTEN**.



May we pray:

Gracious GOD, giver of all gifts, you fulfil the longing in our hearts. Help us to spend time with Your Son. Help us to listen to Him bravely and honestly. Through Him reveal all that you offer us and make us eager to accept your many gifts. This we pray in the name of JESUS.
Amen

Daily Prayer 2020

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