

+*Sunday, January 17, 2021

Second Sunday after Epiphany / Lectionary 2, Year B

Introduction

All the baptised have a calling in God's world. God calls not just pastors and deacons but also the youngest child, like Samuel. The story of the calling of Nathanael plays with the idea of place. Nathanael initially dismisses Jesus because he comes from Nazareth. But where we come from isn't important; it's where—or rather whom—we come to. Jesus refers to Jacob, who had a vision in a place he called "the house of God, and . . . the gate of heaven" (Gen. 28:17). Jesus says he himself is the place where Nathanael will meet God.

Prayer of the Day

P Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful redeemer, for the countless blessings and benefits you give. May we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day praising you, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

1 Samuel 3:1-20

At a time when visions are rare and unexpected, the LORD comes to Samuel and calls him to speak the divine word. Though just a boy, Samuel responds to God obediently, as Eli the priest has taught him to respond. This marks the beginning of Samuel's prophetic ministry.

¹Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

²At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; ³the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" ⁵and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. ⁶The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." ⁷Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." ¹¹Then the LORD said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. ¹²On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. ¹⁴Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of

Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

¹⁵Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. ¹⁶But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." ¹⁷Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." ¹⁸So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him."

¹⁹As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. ²⁰And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD.

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

¹LORD, you have | searched me out;

O LORD, you | have known me.

²You know my sitting down and my | rising up;
you discern my thoughts | from afar.

³You trace my journeys and my | resting-places
and are acquainted with | all my ways.

⁴Indeed, there is not a word | on my lips,
but you, O LORD, know it | altogether.

R/ You have searched me out and known me.

⁵You encompass me, behind | and before,
and lay your | hand upon me.

⁶Such knowledge is too wonder- | ful for me;
it is so high that I cannot at- | tain to it.

¹³For you yourself created my | inmost parts;
you knit me together in my | mother's womb.

¹⁴I will thank you because I am mar- | velously made;
your works are wonderful, and I | know it well.

R/ You have searched me out and known me.

¹⁵My body was not hid- | den from you,
while I was being made in secret and woven in the depths | of the earth.

¹⁶Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb;
all of them were written | in your book;
my days were fashioned before they | came to be.

¹⁷How deep I find your | thoughts, O God!
How great is the | sum of them!

¹⁸If I were to count them, they would be more in number | than the sand;
to count them all, my life span would need to | be like yours.

R/ You have searched me out and known me.

John 1:43-51

In John's gospel, Jesus' ministry begins with the call of disciples, who then bring others to Jesus. Philip's friend Nathanael moves from skepticism to faith when he accepts the invitation to "Come and see."

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

Sermon

Trust in God is Thicker than Blood

Those who claim the gift of faith become members of God's household

It was about 3000 years ago.

The twelve sons of Jacob,
who had escaped from slavery in Egypt,
had been living in the Promised Land for several centuries.

The members of these tribes of Israel had established homes
and farms
and territories for grazing.

Shiloh was one of the most important worship sites for them,
the location of the ark of the covenant,
until King David retrieved it from the Philistines
and brought it to his new capital of Jerusalem.

In those days, members of the Tribe of Levi -
the priestly branch of the family -
followed a schedule to say proper prayers
and offer the appointed sacrifices.

Including a priest named Eli.

In time the old man's sons would,
by tradition,
succeed their father in his religious duties.

Another priest of this era was named Elkanah.

Who had two wives.

Peninnah had bore him children, heirs.

But Hannah was childless.

And she feared losing her husband's love and support.

So she prayed for a child at Shiloh;
long, desperate, rambling prayers.

And Eli heard her.

Eventually being convinced that she was not drunk or delusional.

Some months later she bore a son,
whom she and Elkanah named Samuel.

And in thanks to God
and according to tradition,
she presented him to Eli at Shiloh.

Hannah visited often,
and provided new robes
as the child grew.

Today we've heard the part of the story when God first spoke to the boy.

Tired Eli was annoyed, several times, by the boy who disturbed his slumber.

Until he remembered when God had first spoken to him, in his youth.

The tale is told for two reasons:

First, to break God's long silence.

Visions, "which had been rare in those day," were about to be seen again.

The faith of the skeptical priest and the people was to be renewed.

Second, to deliver a stinging message to Eli.

His good-for-nothing sons would not become priests.

Samuel would become like the old man's son.

And in time a prophet and a general as well.

Trust in God is thicker than blood.

So too, as Jesus gathers his successors.

There was Andrew and his brother Simon Peter.

And then Philip and Nathaniel.

They were descendants of the twelve tribes.

But not from Judea or Jerusalem,
where proper Jews lived.

They were Galileans;
mongrel Jews.

But Jesus' choice all the same.

So that even after his death, resurrection and ascension,
they became the apostles of the movement,
rather than Jesus' brothers.

It's all a way to say that God is creating a new family, community.

Where faith is more important than tradition and genes.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

P Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

A brief silence.

A For the well-being of creation, for plants and animals, and for all that God has marvellously made, that we serve as wise stewards of Earth, our home, let us pray.

C Have mercy, O God.

A For the body of Christ gathered throughout the world and for all servants of the gospel, that following Jesus, the church lives out its calling every day, let us pray.

C Have mercy, O God.

A For police officers and firefighters, for attorneys and paralegals, for peacekeepers and military personnel, and for the leaders of governments, that they provide protection to all people, especially the most vulnerable, let us pray.

C Have mercy, O God.

A For those lacking food or shelter, for those who are sick or grieving, and for those who are imprisoned or homebound (*especially*), that God console all who suffer, let us pray.

C Have mercy, O God.

A For those who continue to study COVID-19, develop vaccines and treatments, care for patients, and help prevent its spread, we give you thanks and ask you to renew them in body, mind and spirit.

C Have mercy, O God.

A For our neighbourhood, for visitors joining us on Zoom for the first time or returning, and for those absent from our assembly, that all who seek to know God are nourished by word and sacrament, let us pray.

C Have mercy, O God.

A In thanksgiving for the saints who have gone before us (including Gisela and Eleanor), that their lives give us a vision of the gospel in action, let us pray.

C Have mercy, O God.

P Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour.

C Amen.

Offering Prayer

O God,

receive these gifts as you receive us:

like a mother receives her child, with arms open wide.

Nourish us anew in your tender care,

and empower us in faithful service
to tend to others with this same love,
through Jesus Christ, our saving grace.

Amen.

Blessing

God the creator strengthen you;
Jesus the beloved fill you;
and the Holy Spirit the comforter ✝ keep you in peace.

Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Be the light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

Upcoming Commemorations

Antony of Egypt, renewer of the church, died around 356

Sunday, January 17, 2021

One of the earliest of the Egyptian desert fathers, Antony gave away his sizeable inheritance and became a hermit. Later he became leader of a group of monks who devoted themselves to prayer, worship, and labor.

Pachomius, renewer of the church, died 346

Sunday, January 17, 2021

Born in Egypt, Pachomius became a Christian while a soldier. He became a hermit (a solitary monk) and organized others into a religious community. His rule for monasteries influenced later ones in both the Eastern and Western churches.

Confession of Peter

Monday, January 18, 2021

Today the church remembers the apostle Peter's great acknowledgement of Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God." This festival serves as a fitting beginning to the week in which we particularly pray that all Christians might be united in faith and witness.

Henry, Bishop of Uppsala, martyr, died 1156

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

When Erik, King of Sweden, determined to invade Finland for the purpose of converting the people there to Christianity, Henry went with him. Henry is recognized as the patron saint of Finland.

Agnes, martyr, died around 304

Thursday, January 21, 2021

Agnes was a girl of about thirteen living in Rome. The details of her martyrdom are not clear, but she gave witness to her faith and was put to death as a result, most likely by the sword. The church has honoured her as one of the chief martyrs of her time.