



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 14 JANUARY 2024- EPIPHANY 2**

COLLECT

Almighty God,
in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 139. 1-5, 12-18

- 1 O Lord, you have searched me out and known me; ♦
you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
- 2 You mark out my journeys and my resting place ♦
and are acquainted with all my ways.
- 3 For there is not a word on my tongue, ♦
but you, O Lord, know it altogether.
- 4 You encompass me behind and before ♦
and lay your hand upon me.
- 5 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, ♦
so high that I cannot attain it.
- 12 For you yourself created my inmost parts; ♦
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- 13 I thank you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; ♦
marvellous are your works, my soul knows well.
- 14 My frame was not hidden from you, ♦
when I was made in secret
and woven in the depths of the earth.
- 15 Your eyes beheld my form, as yet unfinished; ♦
already in your book were all my members written,
- 16 As day by day they were fashioned ♦
when as yet there was none of them.
- 17 How deep are your counsels to me, O God! ♦
How great is the sum of them!
- 18 If I count them, they are more in number than the sand, ♦
and at the end, I am still in your presence.

1 Samuel 3.1-10

Samuel's Calling and Prophetic Activity

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.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the 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. Then the LORD called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' and 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. The 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.' Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The 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. Therefore 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.

Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is from John, chapter 1, verses 43-51.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For a Eucharist/Communion from the Book of Common Prayer (Fitz), there is no Gospel Acclamation- people stand to hear the Gospel, and it is introduced with the words:

The Holy Gospel is written in the 1st chapter of the Gospel according to St John, beginning at the 43rd verse.

Glory be to thee, O Lord.

And then at the end:

Praise be to thee, O Christ.

For Eucharists/ Communion around the rest of Severn Loop, people stand to hear the Gospel and it is introduced with an Acclamation, as below:

Alleluia! **Alleluia!**

Christ was revealed in flesh, proclaimed among the nations and believed in throughout the world.

Alleluia!

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John, chapter 1 verses 43-51.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael

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

A Reflection from Hannah...

Wow- my favourite Psalm and my favourite Old Testament story both on the same Sunday. What are the odds?! After being reminded of our identity in Christ as we remembered his baptism last week, this week's three readings all transmit the same simple message, loud and clear- you are known. YOU are known!

The reach of God's knowledge of us goes far our beyond our own- as the psalmist writes:

*'My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was made in secret
and woven in the depths of the earth.'*

We are known- even in anticipation of our becoming, even before we are born. But it's more than that- God doesn't simply watch from a distance as we live and grow- God acts first to remind us of the love upon which our very existence depends, and to invite us to join with the flow of that same love as it blesses the world.

And so to the calling of Samuel. Before the story is told, the writer is keen to point out that the word of the Lord was rare in those days. A sense of the transcendent breaking through into every reality clearly didn't happen much- or if it did, it was perhaps ignored. That's quite similar to the felt experience of so many in our time and place too. The word of the Lord may feel like a ridiculous concept- something make-believe and childish. The spiritual facet of our personhood is generally ignored through much of our formal education- so if children have special experiences, that may very much feel like the presence of God, it is unlikely that anyone will take their account seriously. And in adulthood- well, it may never be spoken of at all.

And yet, when the word of the Lord comes in this story, it comes to a child during the nighttime. More than that, the child (Saumel) is in the same room as the Ark of the Covenant- he is in a space that contains an object so holy that in other accounts people died when they touched it. Even so, there he is- asleep. It turns out that it is a childlike faith- one which is heavy on trust and light on cynicism- which has the qualities to catch the reality of the creator of the cosmos calling one person by name. But it is also the wisdom of the elderly Eli that enables this experience to be understood. The very old, and the very young. And neither of them, at that moment, was looking for it. The fact that it was nighttime- when we are at our most vulnerable, but also our most passive, helps us to understand the initiative of God. It is always God who speaks first- who names us and calls us and invites us.

And in just the same way, in our Gospel reading Jesus takes the initiative. He marches straight into Galilee and up to Philip and says 'follow me'. And Philip does. Then Nathaneal discovers unlike the usual way of things when people have to introduce themselves, Christ already knows him.

Samuel was known. Eli was known. Philip was known. Nathaneal was known. They were known when they woven in the depths of the earth. As are we. And like them, we are invited to notice the still, small, faithful voice who calls us and loves us and invites us into that same life of love.