

Introduction

All the baptized 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

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. **Amen.**

First Reading: 1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20]

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.

²**You 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.

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

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

⁶**Such 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.

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

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

¹⁶**Your 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.

Gospel Reading: 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."

prayers and introductions from
SundaysAndSeasons.com

Prayers of Intercession

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need, saying “let us pray,” and responding, “have mercy, O God.”

A brief silence.

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. Have mercy, O God.

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

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. Have mercy, O God.

For those lacking food or shelter, for those who are sick or grieving, and for those who are imprisoned or homebound (we hold in prayer, this day, *especially those who we name aloud or on our hearts...* [pause]), that God console all who suffer, let us pray. Have mercy, O God.

For our neighborhood, for visitors joining us 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. Have mercy, O God.

In thanksgiving for the saints who have gone before us (*especially Antony and Pachomius, renewers of the church*), that their lives give us a vision of the gospel in action, let us pray. Have mercy, O God.

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 Savior.

Amen.

A reflection for the Second Sunday after Epiphany...

“Follow Me”

We live in a culture of invitation. Television invites us to join complicated story arcs so that we feel connected to the characters. Commercials invite us to see their product as a new movement and invite us to join it. We are invited to join groups on Facebook and invited into chat rooms and blog responses. The number of social networks is exploding as we are invited into ever expanding ways to connect.

Invitation is an essential part of our walk of faith, but here we frequently see ourselves not as the invited but rather the one who is supposed to be doing the inviting. We can misuse invitation, maybe using the phrase “invite Jesus into your heart,” which often results in the misunderstanding that we are carrying a little bit of Jesus wherever we go. But today’s gospel (John 1:43-51) emphasizes not invitation as our call to others to join the walk of faith but rather Jesus’ invitation to us to follow him. Jesus’ invitation is not that we carry him with us but rather that we follow where he would lead. When Christ invites Philip to “follow me,” may we hear that invitation in our own ears.

(www.SundaysAndSeasons.com)

