

Sunday, January 14, 2024, Second Sunday after Epiphany

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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]

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 ^l searched me out;

O LORD, you ^l have known me.

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

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

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

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

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

¹³For you yourself created my ^l inmost parts;
you knit me together in my ^l mother’s womb.

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

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

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

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

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

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

¹²“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. ¹³“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be

one flesh.”¹⁷ But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.¹⁸ Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself.¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?²⁰ For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

Gospel: John 1:43-51

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

Prayers and introductions from
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Prayers of Intercession

As we celebrate Christ embodied in human form, we pray for God's blessing on the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Encourage the ministry and mission of the church, God of truth. Let the leaders of your church be trustworthy and accountable stewards, that all its resources and outreach bring hope and healing to communities. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Delight in the goodness of your creation, God of fig trees and fertile soil. Heal areas of the world harmed by human greed. Restore those recovering from natural disaster. Protect our forests and waterways and all the creatures that live in them. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Call the leaders of every neighborhood and nation to serve faithfully, God of wisdom. Give them visions of justice and unity. Lead them to action that promotes equitable partnership and uplifts those on the margins of society. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Hold in your care any who suffer and struggle, God of compassion. You who know our inner hearts, be present with any who are oppressed, victims of racism or cultural bias, and all who long for respite or restoration. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Give this congregation the anticipation and excitement of Samuel, so inspired and empowered to do your work in the world, God of unity. Make us faithful as we build communities of inclusion and mutual care. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Trusting God who raised Jesus and will also raise us in spirit and truth, we remember all who have died and are at peace among the saints (*especially the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. whose faithful advocacy for peace and justice continues to embolden the church*). God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Knowing the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, we offer these prayers and the silent prayers of our hearts in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

A reflection for this 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.



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