

EPIPHANY 2

Year B

This Bible study was written by Janelle Hiroshige for Epiphany 2 in 2021.

1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20)

3 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.

² At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; ³ 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. ⁴ Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" ⁵ 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. ⁶ 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." ⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." ¹¹ Then 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. ¹² On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³ For 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. ¹⁴ Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

¹⁵ Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. ¹⁶ But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." ¹⁷ Eli 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." ¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him."

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

Commentary from Janelle Hiroshige

"The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread."

For a community that feels that the inspiration of God is absent, this interaction between God and Samuel is ever more extraordinary. Imagine a time when the divine presence was hard to find. Now imagine the gift of hearing God calling your name. Whom does God call? God does not seek out the king, the teachers, or the successful. God's voice calls out to a boy. The boy responds: "Speak, for your servant is listening." The voice of God is diverse; it calls out to many different people and places at different times. It does not discriminate between the deserving and undeserving. When we hear the voice of God, we need only to respond: "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Discussion Questions

What does it mean to hear God's call today?

What do you do when it seems that God's word is far away and there is a lack of vision?

Psalm 139:1-5, 12-17

- ¹ 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 trace my journeys and my resting-places *
and are acquainted with all my ways.
- ³ Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, *
but you, O Lord, know it altogether.
- ⁴ You press upon me behind and before *
and lay your hand upon me.
- ⁵ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; *
it is so high that I cannot attain to it.
- ¹² For you yourself created my inmost parts; *
you knit me together in my mother's
womb.
- ¹³ I will thank you because I am marvelously
made; *
your works are wonderful, and I know it
well.
- ¹⁴ My body was not hidden from you, *
while I was being made in secret
and woven in the depths of the earth.
- ¹⁵ Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in
the womb;
all of them were written in your book; *
they were fashioned day by day,
when as yet there was none of them.
- ¹⁶ How deep I find your thoughts, O God! *
how great is the sum of them!
- ¹⁷ If 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.

Commentary from Janelle Hiroshige

This is a classic psalm and for good reason. The intimacy of God knowing each and every one of us in this way is the closest we can ever get to truly being known. As humans on this earth, we can never fully know one another – in fact, if we are honest, we may not even truly know ourselves. Because God knows our sitting and rising up and the words on our lips, nothing surprises God. There is not something God will learn later on that will make God change God's mind about us. Being known is complex and nuanced. We may have been betrayed when others have found out things about us, but this passage tells us that there is rest in God being a trustworthy knower.

Discussion Questions

Do you find consolation or shame in being fully known?

Does being known by God give us the strength to risk vulnerability with others?

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

¹²“All things are permitted for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are permitted 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 sexual immorality 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.” ¹⁷But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸Shun sexual immorality! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against the body itself. ¹⁹Or 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? ²⁰For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

Commentary from Janelle Hiroshige

Paul often finds himself speaking to conflict. Today, we might consider him to be a conflict mediator. Divisions within the Christian community are inevitable. In fact, this text shows us that conflict has always existed within churches. Does this sound familiar to our own church contexts? Conflict does not necessarily have to be a bad thing. It is often how issues that already exist are being brought to the surface. So how does one speak to this conflict? Paul reminds the Corinthians that we are not our own. Our lives are interconnected. How we choose to live our lives does not just affect us, but others as well. It is in this recognition that God's spirit gently guides us into the way of peace.

Discussion Questions

How do you handle conflict?

What is the difference between keeping the peace and making peace? Which do you think God is more concerned about?

John 1:43-51

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."

Commentary from Janelle Hiroshige

American culture is obsessed with leadership. Leadership conferences, books, and podcasts are abundant. There is nothing wrong with good leadership, for leadership impacts culture. Leadership can move systems to be more justice-oriented and equitable. We should all seek to be good leaders in whatever spheres we find ourselves in. Yet, this passage asks, are we good followers? Whom are we following? Jesus says to Philip, "Follow me." Philip finds Nathanael and tells him about this encounter with Jesus. Nathanael is reluctant to follow because he is unsure if anything good can come out of Nazareth. Nathanael does not have to go; he can hold on to his assumptions and continue to hide under that fig tree. "Come and see," says Philip. These simple words of invitation can make a world of a difference. It sure has for me.

Discussion Questions

Who invited you to "come and see"?

What does it mean for you to follow Jesus?