

Epiphany 2, Year B, RCL  
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The Church of the Redeemer, Greenville, SC  
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1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20] Psalm 139:1-5, 12-17 1 Corinthians 6:12-10  
John 1:43-51

Today's scripture readings are, in one way, a study of contrasts. Young Samuel is literally sleeping next to the word of God in the form of the Ten Commandments and does not recognize God's voice. In John's gospel, John the baptizer sees Jesus walk by and says "here's the Lamb of God" and, we read "two disciples heard [John] and followed [Jesus]. The prophet Samuel, the first prophet of Israel in a very long time, must hear from God three times in one night, and then be guided to respond to God's voice. Andrew and the other disciple who follow Jesus (immediately) after meeting him do so because someone else said "there he is." Surely they had heard of "the one coming after" John the baptizer.

Today's readings are also about similarities. Hearing about God is not enough. Each of the people in these readings chose to be present with God – Samuel says "speak Lord, your servant is listening." The disciples literally follow Jesus walking and engage him in conversation, replying to Jesus' question. The similarity is the relationship. In each story, God speaks and someone listens well. Each person responds to God; we notice that it is God who speaks first, God who initiates the relationship.

This pattern of listening and responding is similar to the pattern of our Eucharistic worship. We gather in a place created to be close to God. We hear the inspired word of God, we respond with ourselves; in worship, things that represent our life, labor and all of ourselves. Then we come forward to receive God into ourselves, into our lives. Do we realize that it is God who starts this journey and this worship in us?

Eli and the disciples: Andrew, another one, Peter, then Philip and Nathanael, respond to Jesus' call to them. "Follow me." They do not just read about him, hear about him, study his life or actions, but respond bodily: they speak, see where he is staying, walk with him, allow him to teach them, all of which transforms their lives right at the outset. We, too, are called to hang out with Jesus for a while, for a long while.

From our stories, bible witness, we hear that these disciples see Jesus everywhere: in holy places and in their day-to-day life. John the baptizer and those first two disciples are "standing;" think of standing around and chatting at coffee hour, in other times of daily fellowship. After this time, one of them, Andrew, brings his brother to meet Jesus. Jesus transforms Simon immediately; his is and will be changes so much that he has a new name: Peter. Meeting Jesus can be that life changing, then and now. Then Jesus finds Philip, who goes Nathanael. Even when we think we are bringing someone to Jesus, we hear that it is Jesus who has seen us first. Philip says "come and see," to Nathanael. Jesus, in spite of Nathanael's derogatory comment about someone from Nazareth, calls out to Nathanael in a knowing way. My friends, Jesus already knows us and loves us. There is so much gospel, good news, here.

For each follower of Jesus in these passages, someone else points them to Jesus. As in our tradition with infant baptisms, someone else first introduces us to Jesus and brings us to the living water. Then, our theology is that when we say "yes" to the covenant and sacrament of baptism, we are responding to what

God has already initiated. God's grace is present; it is up to us to say "yes" to receiving it. We see the parallel to the reading from John: Jesus is walking around, approaches everyday people, offers them an invitation to "follow me; come and see" what being in relationship with Jesus is about. It changes us, from vocation, to where we stay physically and theologically, to who we spend time with, and maybe even our name. Jesus, as Nathanael discovers, already knows you. He already knows you! Jesus is not some deity in the sky, impossible to reach, but found everywhere we find ourselves.

Our call in following Jesus is to see Jesus everywhere – and he's already there looking for you! Our role is to invite people into places in which they will encounter Jesus the Christ. We do not have to convert people. In fact, we do not convert people. We simply show people where Jesus is, where God is, and God does the converting. It is God who converts us. We simply say "I'm listening. Yes." The good news is that Jesus is everywhere. Do you find Jesus in nature? Take someone there; point out the beauty that God creates. Do you find, are you changed by Jesus here? Are you still looking? Invite someone in to be found by Jesus. Listen well and allow yourself to be found by Jesus. Simply being here, like Samuel, by resting in a holy place, you have put yourself in a place that God resides. Rest, and listen. Let others show you how the voice of God is speaking, still speaking, to you. Remember the words: "speak, Lord, I'm listening." "Speak, I'm ready to hear you. When we listen, and look, and realize that Jesus is everywhere, we begin to see him everywhere. What we do to bring others to Christ is to point him out. Look, there – and there – and here.

I see Jesus in each of you and in this place. I see Jesus in the way we as a community welcome people, pray, show love and care for all of Redeemer: its people, this place, buildings, volunteers, and even the earth under our feet. I see Jesus in the way in which we want to reach out and reach out more into the community and the world. I see Jesus in the way you raise your families and tend to your parents. I see Jesus in food that is delivered, in flowers and plants and refreshed spaces inside and outside. Jesus is here, walking around. Our ministries of maintenance, of updating, of worship, being together here and in the world, help make each place more inviting as a place we and others might dare to think that we'll find Jesus here. And we will, because Jesus is already here.

There are practices as well as places that put us in the presence of God. We grocery shop. Care for our families and one another. Sometimes we have to quiet ourselves and simply be with God. We call this a practice; we call it prayer. Prayer feeds us and builds our relationship with God. Prayer is a response to God, a response that both awakens our hunger for God and feeds us. We starve without setting aside time to be focused on being in the presence of God. Prayer puts us in the presence of God in our bodies, minds and hearts.

None of us might sleep next to the arc of the covenant, but we all have a place in God's house. God has a word, a message, for each one of us. We carry out that message with others. We begin with: "Speak, God. I am listening."

Then with courage and joy we say: "come and see." Follow Jesus with me.

From Frederick Buechner:

Oh, come all ye faithful. "*Adeste fidelis*. That is the only answer I know for people who want to find out whether or not this is true. Come all ye faithful, and all ye who would like to be faithful if only you could, all ye who walk in darkness and hunger for light. Have faith enough, hope enough, despair enough, foolishness enough at least to draw near to see for yourselves."