

Sunday, January 14, 2018

1Samuel 3:1-10

I Corinthians 6:12-20

John 1:43-51

God is Searching- Are You?

This week has been an incredible week for meteorologists and those who work for the Weather network and Weather channel. They watch the air currents, the temperature changes and the tracks of how the clouds and sunshine intermingle. In some situations they could predict exactly what was going to happen with the heavy snowfall on Monday and yet by Friday there were temperatures jumping up and down so rapidly that they just could not state what was going to happen next. They were searching for information to share in order to help everyone cope with the changing weather patterns and for many of us we were watching and waiting to hear what they had to say in order to plan our day or even to plan when to leave home and work in order to get home safely. They were searching for evidence to give that would helpful for others. Yet what was most helpful for many people was just going outside and dealing with what was in front of us.

In this season after Epiphany our focus will be on what to do when/if we hear God calling to us. After Jesus has grown up and he completed his work in the carpentry shop. God spoke to him and said it was time to begin his ministry. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist and God spoke from the heavens declaring Jesus as his son. God told the people watching this, to listen to him. Jesus would soon be ready to begin his ministry but the people who would follow him also needed time to get ready. We are unsure of how long it was before Jesus first called Andrew and Simon Peter to follow but all we do know is that they followed immediately. Jesus called and they followed. But when it comes to being called it is not always this simple or clear because how a call is received makes a difference!

The story of Samuel's call to serve God is one many people like to hear because it is a story of faith being challenged not only with an adult, but a young boy who was ministering with the priest Eli in the synagogue. At that time it was believed that God did not share 'the word of the Lord' very often and it was during a time when prophets did not 'have many visions.' This is an interesting way of recording the fact that people were not paying attention to God or in some ways, people were becoming secular and not focusing on God. Even Eli's family had been called wicked and had no regard for God. But Samuel was a true blessing and gift to Elkanah his faithful mother because she prayed so diligently to have a child. She kept her promise to

God that if she was blessed with a child, he would serve God. So Samuel was in service of the Lord and if we read his story, he continued to grow in stature and in favour.

This story of the calling of Samuel as visually presented in Lego characters teaches many things. Eli the priest was not sure of what was happening with Samuel when he had heard a voice speak to him and call him by name. Samuel thought Eli had called him and he awakened his mentor. It was not until Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy that he gave Samuel the words to say. So he told Samuel, "Go and if he calls you, say, Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." We read—The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel, Samuel!" And the boy responded, "Speak for your servant is listening." God had a special message to tell him about what was going to happen in Israel and about Eli's house. In time, the message heard by Samuel did spread to all of Israel and the people came to regard him as a prophet of God.

God was searching for one individual in this case, Samuel, and he was to become the next prophet to serve Israel, his chosen people. God was searching, and at the same time this boy was learning of the role of the priest with his mentor Eli. Eli's household had disobeyed God and he himself was not sure what had occurred with Samuel hearing voices. But when Eli realized that God was calling the boy, he too renewed his hope and faith in God, knowing that his sons would not follow.

God was searching for Samuel to become his voice to the people of Israel. And if we continue to read in ch.3, "The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up and Samuel let none of his words fall to the ground. Everyone in Israel recognized that Samuel was a prophet of the Lord as God appeared to him and he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

Our reading from John 1 (43-51), continues the story of Jesus calling his disciples. He found Philip and called him to follow. Philip saw Nathanael soon after and Philip told him about being called by Jesus and by way of introduction, he stated, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." But Nathanael did not want to hear this—he mocked Jesus's hometown and questioned whether anything good could come from there. But it was Philip's invitation that made a difference, "Come and see." Nathanael went with Philip and when Jesus saw him, Jesus stated, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." Nathanael asked how do you know this about me? Jesus' response, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you."

Nathanael's first impression about Jesus being from Nazareth completely switched for he then declares Jesus as the Son of God, the King of Israel. Jesus then tells him, "You shall see even

greater things than this! You will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

What did Jesus mean?

A little girl had drawn a beautiful picture of a sunset and her teacher told her that this picture was her best so it would be on display at the school's annual art show. This little girl was so excited to tell her mom this that when she went home she said that the next night was the Art Show and of course both her parents had to go to the school. But, you have to Come and see my project on display on the gym. The parents weren't too sure about going to the school, knowing that their fridge and freezer were already covered with art projects on display. But it didn't matter the little girl said, "Come and see my picture because it will be in the gym."

Of course when the parents arrived they soon realized that each student in the school would have at least one art project on display in the gym of the school. The little girl quickly found her artwork and it was on display along with every other student's sunset picture from her class. But she was so happy that she even asked, "Aren't you glad you came to see my sunset picture? It was worth it right? Come and see!"

When we consider Samuel's call being filled with voices, and drama, and even the presence of the Lord, it is truly moving. Simon Peter and Andrew were doing what they normally do but when they saw Jesus, they started following him. Jesus asked them, What do you want? They wanted to know where he was staying and they went with him. They wanted to see where the Lamb of God went and after Jesus invited them, "Come and see" and they followed.

Philip told Nathanael about Jesus and when Jesus could tell him about his life even a little bit, he followed Jesus. He was impressed at what Jesus knew and Jesus told him that he would see even more- if he followed. And he did.

Are people called to serve God today? Yes, but for resistance is easier. Yet as Christians, what too are called to serve in 2018. For God needs us to serve and be served through faith and with hope. God calls us to bring people together so that as God continues to search for those who will follow, we can tell them about Christ from our experiences, we can share Jesus' story of life, death and resurrection. Are we to just let God continue to do the searching for those who might believe, might come or are we to do what this little girl did—invite others to come and see the things which Jesus can and does do in the hearts and minds of people.

Eli helped Samuel realize that God was calling him. Are we helping others to hear God's voice? Are we enabling others to come and see what God can and does do? Are we even talking about God's grace and Jesus' love? As a church we have many years of experience

being Jesus' disciples because of the life and work of the church which we share. Yet there are many amongst us who are early in their faith journey and are learning what it means to be Christian and living as a faithful disciple of Jesus. It is important that we continue to share that invitation to "come and see," But what exactly are you asking others to see and experience?

Today we are going to share in the words of John Wesley's Covenant first shared in 1747 and as we commit/ dedicate or recommit/ rededicate ourselves to serving God in expressing the words written over 270 years ago, we are stating our reason for worship, for work and service in the church. And for those who are wondering about what this means, it is an act of faith and commitment to serve Christ Jesus as your Saviour in this new year and it means that you are open to receive God's grace and blessings, challenges and opportunities as we continue to reach out and offer to others Christ's love. God is searching for people to serve him and be his hands and feet in the world. Are you seeking God? Are you wondering about your relationship with Jesus as Saviour? Come and see; come and experience; come and learn what it means to follow Jesus now and always.

Let us pray:

Jesus you called Simon Peter, Andrew, Philip and Nathanael to follow you without them even knowing you or what you were going to do and be. Yet they believed in the promised Messiah and through faith they followed you and grew to understand your purpose as God's Son.

Help us to come and see who you are. In the words we shall share today; in the tasting of the bread and juice and in the fellowship we share gathered as the body of Christ in this place. Be with us through the questions as we search for you and for answers. Be with us as we look to know who you are and can be for us not only today or in this New Year- but throughout our lives. We ask these things as we share with you those matters from our hearts in this time of quiet. SILENCE> Amen.