

Epiphany 2 B
1 Samuel 3: 1-20
Psalm 63: 1-8
I Corinthians 6 11b-20
John 1: 43-51

All of today's lessons have to do with call.

Let's start with that wonderful story of the call of Samuel. Notice in the beginning of the lesson, that the writer says, "The **word of the Lord was rare in those days**; visions were not widespread."

He could have easily been talking about today. I do not know of many people who see visions. Nor do many of us hear voices that we can attribute to God.

He goes on to say **Samuel did not know the Lord** and the word of God had not yet been revealed to him. Samuel was dedicated to the Lord and sent to live at the temple when he was just a boy, but he did not know the Lord meaning that **he had not had a personal conversion experience.**

After God calls Samuel three times, Eli, the Old Man, realizes that God is calling Samuel. He tells Samuel to go and wait and if he hears him again to say “Speak for your servant is listening.”

It’s important to note that Samuel got a second opinion about who was calling him. He didn’t make that decision on his own. He spoke with Eli, a wise elder. He also got guidance about what he should do with the message, even if it was not good news.

When Samuel hears the Lord the fourth time he learns that there will be punishment for the house of Eli. Which Samuel, trembling in his boots, will share with Eli.

Then at the end of the lesson we learn that the Lord was with Samuel and let none of his words fall to the ground. Samuel became a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.

The same thing happens with the call of Philip and Nathaniel, Jesus calls Philip and then Philip goes and shares the good news with Nathaniel. . Note that Nathaniel doesn't believe what Philip is saying, when he responds with, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" That's the other side of the tracks, not the best neighborhood."

But Philip is persistent, "Come and see." And Nathaniel has his conversation with Jesus and is converted when he realizes that Jesus knows him.

I think, God calls each of us to a time of personal conversion. Then he tells us what ministry he has for us. We may not recognize the call of God in our day-to-day lives. But if we share what we think God is calling us to do we will be able to confirm if what we are hearing is from God or if it is not.

That is why the members of our search committee are functioning as a discernment committee. As a group they will decide if any of those people who are applying are the right person for Trinity at this time.

But it is not only those who are on the Search Committee that need to discern what it is that God is calling them to do. We heard in 1 Corinthians that you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

Each of us is to **live into our baptism**, and for each of us that may mean something different. But asking another individual or group of individuals is an important part of the discernment process.

I remember a Sunday a number of years ago, when a recently retired person in my parish came up to communion. Now I knew that this person was wondering what he should do with his retirement time.

As he was receiving communion, I heard a voice say, "Habitat for Humanity." Later I shared with him what I heard. And he said, "I too heard the same thing at the same time." We both looked at this as a call from God.

Living into our Baptism means that we live out the ministry of the laity. When you look at the catechism you will note that "the **ministry of Lay Persons** is to **represent Christ** and his Church: to **bear witness** to him wherever they may be; and **according to the gifts** given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the governance of the Church."

That seems like a big order until you look at the line that says, according to the gifts given to them. Each person is called to do some things and not others. In the church for example, there are those who are called to sing in the choir, while others of us just sing along as best as we can.

Maybe you are called to be a reader during the service or a Eucharistic Lay minister. Notice that the priest doesn't do everything to lead the service. We have good helpers up here.

Maybe you are called to help with the Altar Guild. I've said to altar guild members, "I flunked altar guild when I was in Seminary, so I really appreciate what you do."

Some are called to do coffee hour or help put on events like funeral receptions or special events. They offer the ministry of hospitality. While others are called to keep the buildings in good repair or shovel snow.

Others have things to do in the world, like teaching, healing or working to make our environment better. Maybe your call at this time is to be the best parent you can be. Teaching your children what it means to live as caring, loving people.

At a time like this when our congregation is in an in between time each of us is called to help make this church and its ministries viable. Maybe you are called to help with church school or teach an adult forum class.

Maybe you are called to be on the vestry. Or you have technology skills that you could use here.

Maybe you are called to help on the Pastoral Care team as a driver who takes individuals to doctor's appointments or a person who visits those who are shut-in. Maybe you can help with meals for those who just got out of the hospital.

If you have a passion for helping underserved kids. The K.I.D.S. team will welcome you. If you have a passion for working with Latino individuals. Contact members of the LOVE team. If mission travel interests you, maybe a Condega trip might be in your future.

If you have cooking or restaurant skills. Family Kitchen can always use more help.

Maybe you have time to volunteer in the church office to answer the phone and help Ali in the office.

But what **under girds all of this activity is the prayer ministry** of those who support the outwardly busy folks.

Some of our shut-in folks are on the prayer team. Formerly active people who now due to physical disability are still holding us up. I know when I visit shut-in people they always ask what is happening at church or how is so and so doing. They ask so they know who and what to pray for.

There is a group of people who make “Prayer shawls”. These nice warm shawls are hand knit or crocheted. They pray about who they will give them to, while they are making them. Then they present them to the individuals they have selected. Some of them knit as a group and some of them knit alone. But what is happening is that more people are praying for each other and the world.

You see not all ministries are outwardly visible; some very important parts are behind the scenes.

Just as Samuel was sleeping when God called him. And Nathaniel was sitting under the fig tree when Jesus called him.

In the psalm it says, "When I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the night watches."

Those can be the listening times, the times of wondering what is the ministry that God will have for you today? What is the ministry that God is calling you to at this time in your life?

The more we listen to those around us, and the more we listen to each other, the more clearly we will hear the call of God and know what he has in mind for us.

It is important to keep the balance between listening and doing. The balance between prayer and physical activity. It is in the balance that God keeps us centered in Him.

Let us pray

Come Holy Spirit guide and strengthen, the members of this parish in all things that we may do in the service of God's kingdom. Give us courage, patience and vision; and strengthen us all in our Christian vocation of witness to the world and of service to others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.