

LECTIONARY REFLECTIONS
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
The Rt. Rev. Susan B. Haynes

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

This reading from Samuel highlights the importance of being rooted in a Christian community because our brothers and sisters can often recognize the hand of God moving in our life long before we are able to. Eli was a high priest living during the time of judges in Israel. Samuel is serving Eli and hears a voice calling him three times which he mistakes for the voice of Eli, but it is actually the voice of God. Eli, a man of humble spirit, quickly recognizes that God is summoning Samuel and counsels Samuel on how to turn and listen to the voice of God. God imparts to Samuel an unfavorable word for Eli – that he is about to be punished for not having restrained his sons earlier from blaspheming God. When Eli wants to know what God has told Samuel, Samuel is afraid to say it out loud but finally does after Eli compels him. In a remarkable show of humility, Eli submits to the authority and punishment of God. It took courage on the part of Samuel to tell Eli his vision, but after having done so, we are told that Samuel grew, that the Lord was with him, that God protected and prospered the words of Samuel and that Israel regarded Samuel as a trustworthy prophet.

It takes courage to live a life in God authentically. Sometimes we are afraid to say out loud what it is God is revealing to us through our relationship with him. Where in the last week have you found it difficult to talk about your faith? When you are able to do so, do you sense God's strong presence with you, making sure that your own words do not "fall to the ground?" Consider your own Christian community and those who worship with you. Where do you see God moving in their lives? Have they told you where they see God moving in your life? How can you do that for each other?

Psalm 139:1-5, 12-17

Psalm 139 is an exquisite description of intimacy – the intimacy that exists between God and His creation. What a relief to understand that God knows us so intimately! When we are befuddled by the workings of our own mind, heart, soul and body, we can trust that God sees and knows everything. He knows our motivations and intentions. He knows our goals. He also knows our shortcomings and those things which hold us back. "You press upon me behind and before and lay your hand upon me." God encompasses us and holds us in both of His hands, almost as a potter lovingly holds a lump of clay. Verses 12-15 describe how God oversaw the forming of our very body and how He knows that body intimately – the very cells! We are not equipped to understand how deeply and widely God knows us. We are not equipped to receive completely this wide intimacy. We have to walk into it. There is definitely great comfort in being held so closely by someone who knows me more than I am capable of knowing myself.

Trusting that you are being held in the hands of someone who knows you better than you know yourself, how easy is it to trust the direction in which He propels you?

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

In the Psalm, we encounter the value and beauty of our bodies as God formed them. In this letter of Paul to the Church at Corinth, we are introduced to the importance of this body as the Temple of the Holy Spirit. If our bodies house the Holy Spirit, then they must be acknowledged as belonging to God and must be cared for. We must stand guard against those things which threaten to dominate the body – obsessions and addictions to which we are vulnerable. These things which threaten to dominate us, food and alcohol as examples, are things that in and of themselves are lawful but can be misused. Paul concludes by telling us that the body is meant for the Lord and is joined to Christ.

God oversaw the making of our bodies in the womb with great care. God intends this body as a temple for the Holy Spirit and to be joined to Christ. How, therefore, do you treat that which is joined to Christ?

John 1:43-51

In this selection from John, we are at the beginning of Jesus's ministry. Here Jesus appears as any normal human being. He has not particularly said or done anything outstanding yet. He shows up in Galilee and says to Philip, "Follow me." And Philip follows him! There must have been something compelling about Jesus even if he had not yet done anything compelling. And Philip is so compelled that he issues a loving invitation to others to "Come and see," and they too are compelled. Notice the frequent use of the verb "to see" in this passage. People are invited to see. They see Jesus. Jesus sees them. Nathanael is promised to see greater things, including the heavens opened and angels ascending and descending. During this season of Epiphany, we too are invited "to see." We are invited to come, see, and follow as the mystery of Christ's being is revealed to us. Christ is as compelling today as he was when he appeared in Galilee. He sees us! And wants us to see Him and to follow. Following Jesus will help us to see.

What about Jesus compels you? What did you "see" in Jesus that caused you to decide to follow Him? What is being unveiled about Him even now in your life? Why do you keep following Him? What do you see NOW?

COLLECT:

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.