



St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Wilton, WI

Second Sunday after Epiphany

January 17, 2021

**Inviting People to
Journey with Christ's Family
in Spreading God's Love and Mercy**

All the baptized have a calling in God's world. God calls not just pastors and deacons but also the youngest child, like Samuel. The story of the calling of Nathanael plays with the idea of place. Nathanael initially dismisses Jesus because he comes from Nazareth. But where we come from isn't important; it's where—or rather whom—we come to. Jesus refers to Jacob, who had a vision in a place he called “the house of God, and . . . the gate of heaven” (Gen. 28:17). Jesus says he himself is the place where Nathanael will meet God.

Be Thou My Vision



1 Be thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
2 Be thou my wis - dom, and thou my true word;
3 Rich - es I heed not, nor vain, emp - ty praise,
4 Light of my soul, af - ter vic - to - ry won,



naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
I ev - er with thee and thou with me, Lord.
thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways:
may I reach heav - en's joys, O heav - en's Sun!



thou my best thought both by day and by night,
Thou my soul's shel - ter, and thou my high tow'r,
thou and thou on - ly, the first in my heart,
Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,



wak - ing or sleep - ing, thy pres - ence my light.
raise thou me heav'n - ward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.
great God of heav - en, my trea - sure thou art.
still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all.

Text: Irish, 8th cent.; vers. Eleanor H. Hull, 1860–1935, alt.; tr. Mary E. Byrne, 1880–1931
Music: SLANE, Irish traditional

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful redeemer, for the countless blessings and benefits you give. May we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day praising you, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

WORD

First Reading

At a time when visions are rare and unexpected, the LORD comes to Samuel and calls him to speak the divine word. Though just a boy, Samuel responds to God obediently, as Eli the priest has taught him to respond. This marks the beginning of Samuel's prophetic ministry.

1 Samuel 3:1-20

¹Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

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

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

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

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

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

- ¹LORD, you have searched me out;
O LORD, you have known me.
- ²You know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
- ³You trace my journeys and my resting-places
and are acquainted with all my ways.
- ⁴Indeed, there is not a word on my lips,
but you, O LORD, know it altogether.
- ⁵You encompass me, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
- ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain to it.
- ¹³For you yourself created my inmost parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- ¹⁴I will thank you because I am marvelously made;
your works are wonderful, and I know it well.
- ¹⁵My body was not hidden from you,
while I was being made in secret and woven in the depths of the earth.
- ¹⁶Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb; all of them were written in
your book;
my days were fashioned before they came to be.
- ¹⁷How deep I find your thoughts, O God!
How great is the sum of them!
- ¹⁸If 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.

SECOND READING

Paul helps the Corinthians understand that God has claimed the entirety of their lives through the death of Christ. Hence Christian relationships and conduct, including areas of human sexuality, are to reflect the reality that we belong to Christ and that the Holy Spirit lives within us.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

¹²"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful 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 fornication 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 fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator 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.

HOLY GOSPEL

In John's gospel, Jesus' ministry begins with the call of disciples, who then bring others to Jesus. Philip's friend Nathanael moves from skepticism to faith when he accepts the invitation to "Come and see."

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."

SERMON

Whose voice are you listening to? Whose words are speaking to you, leading you and guiding you? Whose words are moving your thoughts and perhaps encouraging your actions?

Our Old Testament lesson for today is from 1 Samuel, chapter 3. But, the context for our passage begins prior to our pericope. We learn that Hannah was barren. She prayed that God would allow her to have a child. When she did, her son, Samuel, was selected by God to become a prophet.

We also learn that the two sons of Eli the priest, Hophni and Phineas, are sinning against God. The two sons, who are in fact subordinate priests to Eli, are blaspheming God! Yet, Eli, has not taken the leadership to stop their sinful behaviors.

Eli has been mentoring the child, Samuel, for Samuel is destined to be a prophet who speaks God's words of instruction to human beings. We might think that a child could not proclaim the words of God, but Samuel does. And it is the adults in this pericope who are the ones who need to hear God's words of instruction from this child! The adults are sinning; Eli's sons, by their acts of commission, and Eli, by his acts of omission.

In our pericope, Samuel hears a voice in the night and thinks that it is his mentor, Eli, calling him. But the voice calling Samuel is God's voice with a message for Eli and his sons. The message is that God is going to punish them! Samuel hears these words from God, "For I have told him [Eli] 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. Therefore, I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

Samuel is concerned about what he has been told. It is a true test of his faithfulness to God in God's first prophecy expressed to him. And, even though Eli knows the message will be a harsh one, he wants to hear God's word. Eli's faith and trust in God tells him that it is God speaking through his prophet, Samuel, and the message God is sending is one that he and his sons need to hear! Per Cory Driver, "Samuel revealed that Eli's deeply problematic leadership was over, and Samuel's tenure as judge was about to begin. God's passionate disgust at abusive leadership and raising up young prophets to undo the abuses of their elders who ignored God and failed to protect innocent people will be a theme that returns through much of the rest of Scripture" (*Working Preacher*)

Fast forward to 2021. The events of Wednesday, January 6, the day when many Christians celebrate the "Epiphany of our Lord," was a sad day in the history of the United States. Never before has the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., been breached by an insurrection of such proportions. People throughout the world saw on television how earthly voices, including elected leaders, can enlist support from persons to enact violence and rebellion. We as Christians may wonder how earthly voices, including those who profess to know and follow God, can go so far astray from God's teachings.

We as Christians may also wonder how some of the rioters could wave banners with God's name or Jesus' name on them, as if this insurrection was approved or sanctioned by God! Many of us saw the banners with the name of a human being in large letters, while God's name appeared in small letters, below it. This is idolotry! This is blasphemy! God does not take second place to anyone or anything! Many of us also saw the signs, "Jesus Saves." Do we as Christians actually believe that Jesus is being glorified through this banner at this insurrection?

It is blasphemous for persons to use God's name in ways that promote one's own glorification. It is blasphemous to promote the glorification of another human being in God's name. Whose voice were the rioters listening to? Whose words were speaking to them, leading them and guiding them? Whose words were moving their thoughts and encouraging their actions?

In another location in Washington, D.C., on January 6, 2021, a group of ELCA clergy were gathered in prayer. Protestors entered Luther Place Memorial Church. Per Bishop Leila Ortiz, they "barged into the

encircled sacred space held by those present. These individuals proceeded to re-enact the murder of George Floyd in our midst and took pictures in front of the Black Lives Matter sign and Martin Luther statue." There actions were a desecration of a holy space.

Hearing this story is so upsetting. We perhaps feel some of the pain of our brothers and sisters who were present there. To be gathered in prayer only to be mocked and ridiculed, is a travesty. To have God mocked and ridiculed, especially in a church, is blasphemy!

It is understandable that the child, Samuel, did not recognize God's voice calling him in our pericope. This was Samuel's first prophecy from God. His mentor, Eli, told Samuel when he heard the voice again to say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." When Samuel responded to God's voice, he heard God's voice and message clearly! Per Roger Nam, one of the themes in this scripture reading, is that "...Samuel learns to forego his own agency in favor of God's agency."

We know that we are all sinful people who fall short of God's desires for us. We know that we can be tempted to follow the crowd, to listen to voices that build us up for our own glorification, and to take the easy route, rather than the faithful, faith-filled journey that God desires for us. We know that when we stray from God and God's teachings, we sin and we need to ask God for forgiveness. We also know that there will be persons who will persist in thinking that their own glorification, or the glorification of another human being, or the glorification of a blasphemous idolatry or other way of life, is acceptable and even desirable! To act in this way, one needs only to become complacent by accepting lies over truth; use devaluing, degrading speech over unifying and peaceful speech; compromise one's values and morals, rather than follow God's teachings; and exhibit other means of sinning, whether by oneself, or with the encouragement and engagement of others!

Whose voice are you listening to? A human voice that is leading you astray, or God's voice speaking to you through the Holy Spirit. Whose words are moving your thoughts and perhaps encouraging your actions? God speaks to us through scripture, preaching and song. God speaks to us through prayer. Whose words are speaking to you, leading you and guiding you? I pray that they are God's words; God's word for you, personally, and God's word for us, collectively. I pray that you, and all of us are saying to God, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

God loves us. God loves us even when we sin and fall short of God's desires for us. For Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, died and rose again, so that we might receive his grace, his forgiveness, his gift of everlasting life. We too are called to hear God's word for us. We too are called to know and to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We too are called to love our neighbor as ourself.

As we listen for God's voice speaking to us, leading us and guiding us, we too are called to share the good news with others. Is this not a better way? Is this not a faithful way of being God's people in the world? Is this not a faithful way for us to do God's work in the world for the benefit of all God's people? Amen and Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

For the body of Christ gathered throughout the world and for all servants of the gospel, that following Jesus, the church lives out its calling every day, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For the well-being of creation, for plants and animals, and for all that God has marvelously made, that we serve as wise stewards of Earth, our home, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For police officers and firefighters, for attorneys and paralegals, for peacekeepers and military personnel, and for the leaders of governments, that they provide protection to all people, especially the most vulnerable. We especially pray for a smooth and peaceful transition of leadership this week in the United States, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For those lacking food or shelter, for those who are imprisoned or homebound, and for those who are sick or grieving, especially Katie, Judy, Darlene, Paul, Pam, Alrita, Frank, Jeff, Tessa, Lisa, Bud, Gary, Jim, the family of Ann, and those we name aloud and in our hearts, that God console all who suffer, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For our neighborhood, for visitors joining us for the first time or returning, and for those absent from our assembly, that all who seek to know God are nourished by word and sacrament, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For our neighbors near and far, that they will seek to know God and be nourished by God's word, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

In thanksgiving for the saints who have gone before us, that their lives give us a vision of the gospel in action, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.

Amen.

TRUST, GUIDANCE

Lead Me, Guide Me

768

Refrain



Lead me, guide me, a - long the way;



for if you lead me, I can - not stray.



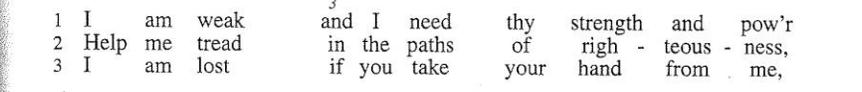
Lord, let me walk each day with thee.



Lead me, O Lord, lead me.



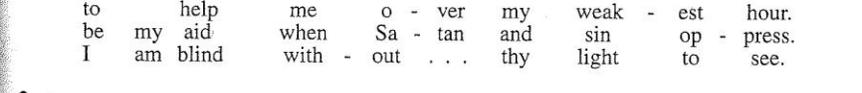
1 I am weak and I need thy strength and pow'r



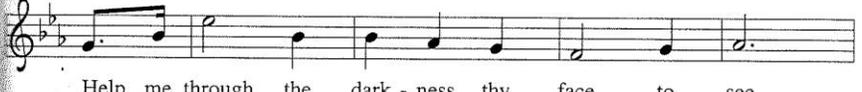
2 Help me tread in the paths of righ - teous - ness,



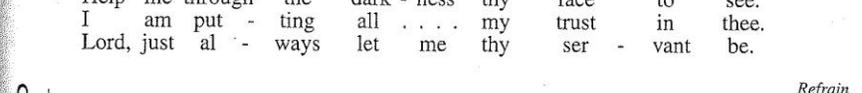
3 I am lost if you take your hand from me,



to help me o - ver my weak - est hour.



be my aid when Sa - tan and sin op - press.



I am blind with - out . . . thy light to see.



Help me through the dark - ness thy face to see.



I am put - ting all . . . my trust in thee.



Lord, just al - ways let me thy ser - vant be.

Refrain



Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

Text: Doris Akers, 1922-1995
 Music: Doris Akers
 Text and music © 1953 Doris Akers, admin. Unichappell Music, Inc.

LEAD ME, GUIDE ME
 Irregular

CALENDAR

Thurs., January 21

W-ELCA Quilting

9:00 AM

We ask that all members join the Women of ELCA and pray this prayer as you rise in the morning and as you prepare to retire each evening.

Lord, Jesus Christ, I bring to you:

Jada, Myles, & Conner Garske; Britain Hahn, Gracie & Kaden Brandau; Katie Pagel, Amara Brandau; Chase Brandau; Avery Brueggen; Riley Brueggen; Nolan & Logan Buchholz; Thadyn & Ayawyn Conner; Vanessa & Elliott Ornes; Lailah Eckes; Kennedy & Josie Ornes; Lena Ornes; Porter Sorenson; Brooklyn, Madelyn, Kaylin, Emma, Bryce, Marah, Brie, Ava, Katie, & Benjamin Gruen; Mikayla & Brady Zimmerman; MaKenzie & Cooper Powell; Wesson Mayne, Arden Mayne; Vanessa, Mia, & Brek Anderson; Tyler & Jaden Bever; Carlee, Collin, & Camden Neidfeldt; Morgan Speicher; Avery, August & Addison Arndt; Krista & Sierra Cook; Tyler Brandau; Franklin & Douglas Wildes; Sophia, Derek & Deacon Erdman; Kody Tormoen; Angel Brueggen; Robert & Dana Cale; Callie Fleming; Sara Osteboe; Miranda, Daphne & Linus Arndt; Natalie, Brodie & Fynlie Stanek; Emma Elder; Bryson Lamb; Alaina & Braxton Holthaus; Jada Leis; David & Sam Ross; Gannon Tormoen; Jase & Margo Picha.

That your spirit will dwell with them according to your will. That they will grow in the knowledge of you and know that they are dearly loved by you. I pray that you will protect them from deception by the evil one and all his darts that would lead them astray. May they do well in school, learning and discerning what direction you have in mind for them. I also pray for all children every where, that you would keep them in your care.

In Jesus name I pray. Amen