

Second Sunday after Epiphany  
Year B

1 Samuel 3:1-20  
Psalm 139:1-5, 12-17  
1 Corinthians 6:12-20  
John 1:43-51

The call of God comes in many different forms. Rarely is the call as obvious as those we read about in Scripture, but the call is there just the same. There are times the call is obvious, as when Jesus called His disciples and at other times we might think it is someone other than God who is calling, as we see in the case of Samuel in our reading from the Hebrew Scriptures today. Regardless of how the call comes, how we respond to the call is significant.

In the reading from 1 Samuel, the boy hears the voice of God but thinks it is the old priest, Eli, calling to him. Even though hearing the voice of God had been rare in those days and visions were not common, God spoke to Samuel in the night. Only after the third time did Eli realize that it was the voice of God that Samuel was hearing. He instructed the boy to respond to God by saying he was listening. In the three episodes, Samuel had been quick to run to Eli and say, "Here I am." Eli suggested Samuel respond to God in the same manner. What was the message God had for Samuel? It was one of judgment upon Eli and his family. We must give Eli credit for accepting the judgment of God, even though it must have been difficult to hear that message.

In the Gospel reading, we see Jesus calling Philip. In a story that precedes this passage, John the Baptizer had already proclaimed Jesus as the Lamb of God in the hearing of two of his disciples and they followed after Jesus. When Jesus asked what they were seeking, Andrew and the other disciple asked where Jesus was staying. As we know, Jesus invited them to join Him. At that time, Andrew told his brother, Simon Peter, and brought him to Jesus. In the calling of Philip, we see a similar dynamic - Philip tells his friend, Nathanael, about Jesus and suggests he "come and see."

In both of these episodes from the Gospel of John, Jesus invites one person who immediately calls someone else to join the group. In gathering His disciples, Jesus uses a direct approach of calling someone to leave their current occupation to become one of His disciples and, at other times, allows a disciple to bring a friend into the band. Thus, we have two different examples of how to attract people to the church.

There is also no set response to the invitation to follow. Samuel was quick to respond with "Here I am." Andrew and the other disciple joined Jesus to see where He was staying. Nathanael's response might be closer to what we might hear from those we ask to join us, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" In our day, we might also hear skepticism from those we invite to church. A common answer we hear might be closer to the parable of the king asking people to come to his banquet - "I am too busy with my life." At least Nathanael did join Philip and approach Jesus.

Each of us has our own story of how God called us to follow Jesus. Some may not be able to ever remember a time when we weren't faithful to church. Others might have been influenced by a friend or drawn by some event that brought us to the church. Some might have responded at the first suggestion, while others needed convincing.

As all of the disciples learned in the years of following Jesus, the initial call was only the beginning. There was much to learn and more to be required of them than they ever imagined. The same is true for us today. Although we may have been faithful in our response to God for many years, we are still learning what God requires from us. That initial call got us in the door; now God is opening the path for each of us to follow, even as the disciples discovered the path they were to follow - to Jerusalem, but also in the post-resurrection life to mission fields far spread. We may not be asked to travel abroad to spread the Gospel message, but we are each called to do the work God has placed before us. As our prayer says, "we are not called to sit and watch, but to go and do." What is God asking you to go and do?