

## **Reflection (by Zoom 17th January 2021)**

### **Readings: I Sam 3 1-10; John 1 43-end**

Today I've had help with preparing this reflection. The home group I'm part of studied our readings and came up with a wide range of ideas – too many to share this morning. I'll be asking a number of questions, and will pause so that you can think what answer you might have. When we break into rooms – small groups – at the end of this service, you might like to discuss some of your ideas.

Both of our readings today talk about God's call. We don't know how old Samuel was when he heard God's voice. He's referred to as a child. He certainly shows the innocence of a child. He hears his name called and responds immediately to the only person he knows is in the tent of the Lord's presence – Eli. He must have been confused when Eli said he hadn't called him and to go back and lie down. But the voice came again. And Again. And Again. Calling him by name.

Samuel knew of God – clearly he was serving the priest in the holy place. But he didn't know Him. He didn't recognise His voice. It took Eli a while to understand what was happening, and to point Samuel in the right direction. Samuel goes back to his bed, responds and hears clearly a message that he's to give to Eli. A message that would be difficult for a youngster to give to the senior priest – as you will discover if you read further into chapter 3.

### **I wonder if you've ever had such a direct calling from God?**

In John's Gospel we heard how Jesus calls first Philip and then Nathaniel. I find this a little easier to relate to. A real man (Jesus) inviting Philip to follow him. As they get to know one another, Philip is convinced that Jesus is the Messiah – the one foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament. In his excitement, Philip recruits one of his friends: *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 notice Nathaniel's disbelief: *Can anything good come from Nazareth?* And yet once he encounters Jesus, Nathaniel is utterly convinced: *Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel.*

### **I wonder when you became convinced that Jesus is the Son of God, the King of Israel?**

Sometimes we put great emphasis on the call of God. Right from the days of Paul whose conversion was dramatic, many have experienced a specific call from God. We often associate this with calls to full-time Christian work, becoming a priest or a missionary, or perhaps a nurse.

But the truth is that we are all called. We are called first of all to faith and discipleship. All Christians are called to worship God, work for His purposes, and witness to His presence in the world. Right now we are here, worshipping God. When the service is over, we go out to work for His purposes and witness to His presence in the world.

### **I wonder how you (and I) will work and witness for Him this week?**

As well as this general call, each of us has a particular calling – the specific way God wants us to live our lives. We learn in the New Testament how Paul was called to be an apostle, Stephen to be a deacon, Philip to be an evangelist, and others were involved in various ways. It's the same today. Many of us are retired and are using our skills in particular ways – like Pip and Pauline, Susan, Jackie, Peter, Davina and many others at the Big Table. Others have opportunities in a wide variety of work places and social situations.

If you're wondering about your own specific calling, please feel free to contact one of us after this service – you'll find a range of contact details at the end of this order of service. But it's worth considering a framework that might help. It's called SHAPE and each letter stands for a strand of who we are – if we understand ourselves and how life has shaped us, we might see more clearly what our particular calling is.

So, S is for Spiritual Gifts, H is for our Heart's Desire, A for Abilities, P for Personality and E for Experience. People who know you well should be able to help you explore these areas, and it would be possible to put on a short course for any who are interested. In my teens, I always dreaded that God would call me to be a nurse. He called my sister to be one, but not me! He made us, he knows us and his calling for us fits in with who we are.

### **I wonder what step you might take towards discovering your particular calling?**

One of those in my home group pointed out that God called Samuel at a time of day when there were no obvious other distractions and asked the question: **Should we put ourselves in a quiet place more often?**

Someone else pointed out that God spoke to a young boy, not to the senior priest. There are other examples in the Bible of the role that children have played in God's purposes. **How can we help children and young people to encounter God for themselves?**

Philip went and found his friend Nathaniel and invited him to meet Jesus. Nathaniel responded positively (although with some doubt about anyone coming from Nazareth) and recognised Jesus as being the Messiah. Why is it easier to invite a friend to share a leisure activity than to invite them to a church-related one? Some of you may have heard Michael Harvey speak about "Invitational Church". He stresses that success is giving an invitation – not whether people actually come. Two years ago Nigel challenged those of us at the Cathedral to invite three people to one of the many different activities that were going on over Easter. I managed two invitations. Both were accepted, although one person wasn't well on the night. With all the difficulties that Covid has brought, many people are asking big questions, wondering whether there is something in some form of spirituality. God wants everyone to come into His family. He is calling them.

### **Could you ask God to nudge you to someone who would welcome an invitation?**

Well, that's seven questions to think about. I don't expect for one moment you've remembered them all, but they are on the copy of our newsletter, The Link, which you should have been sent so that you could follow the order of service. Can I encourage you to make space to listen to God, to discover how your unique personality, ability, gifting, experience and heart's desire can blossom as you discover afresh the purpose that God has for you?

Amen

Rosemary Clarke