

SUNDAY, January 14, 2024 EPIPHANY 2 “Committed to Serve Christ in Prayer”

I Samuel 3:1-10 John 1:43-51

A little boy and girl were outside playing in the snow when they discovered something amazing as they stared up in the sky and looked down onto the ground. They asked each other what it was; but neither were sure what they had seen after they had rolled a big snowball in order to make a snowman. They stared at it again and then said, “Let’s get mom to see what it is.” So they ran into the house all excited and of course tracked snow into the kitchen as they ran.

The mother said, “what’s wrong?” And then said, “Take your boots off! You’re getting snow everywhere.”

But the children just said, “Mom come and see!” “Come and see”, they said again. “Come and see, what?” “No just come and see!”

So the mother put on her coat and boots and followed her children out to the yard where they had started making a snowman. Then the Mom asked, “What am I looking at that is so important?”

The children started giggling and laughing and then the mom did too. What were they laughing at? They were all just staring up into the sky, looking down again and said, ‘Wow’! What had they wanted their mom to see? The snow falling down on their heads, toques and just seeing the wonder of snow for what it is. Unique flakes each created on its own yet amazing when rolled, piled and shaped. Come and see!”

As we begin our focus on Preparing to Pray—I invite you to “come and see”; follow what we are going to do together in these next few weeks—Trust God’s Spirit to bless you just like the snow flakes that fell on the mom and children. Come and experience what God gives as you are called to Christ Jesus. Come and experience the wonder of prayer and the joy that God still calls people to serve Him.

It does not matter how old you are—younger older- or in between each of us can serve Christ in prayer because there is no age minimum requirement or maximum either! When we are called to serve it is because God calls us to be in His presence, cut off from others in order that we can share our thoughts and ideas, desires and intentions. But we must be committed to him in some way!

Our first reading from I Samuel 1 is a wonderful story of being called to serve and this focuses on a young boy Samuel who was ministering under Eli in the temple. Eli was getting old and did not see as well, and this one evening they are both resting for the night. A voice calls out to the young boy, "Samuel, Samuel" and the boy runs to Eli thinking it is his voice he hears. But Eli denies calling him. They go back again to rest. Again the voice sounds, "Samuel, Samuel" and the boy runs to Eli. Samuel is just in the learning period of knowing God and God's word had not yet been revealed to him. The voice called the boy again but when the boy goes to Eli, the mentor- teacher tells Samuel that if the voice calls again answer. He is to say, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." The voice calls again, Samuel answers and listens to the voice." He now has experienced God's voice and answers with the words, "here I am".

How many times have you been called by name to do a task? Maybe not so often any more but as we have grown up we learn to answer when our name is called. Why? Because there is either one of two things—something good is going to happen, or something is recognized that maybe was not so good.

Samuel was chosen by God to tell Eli what would happen with his family because they had disobeyed God's way of living. Eli's response was "Let God do what he seems good to him."

As we enter 2024 we enter a time of self- reflection on this past year, and what this new year might bring in both challenges and hopes. What might we be able to do differently, learn or even teach others? What is it that we are called to do as we share and serve Christ? And what does it mean to commit and renew oneself as we grow closer to Jesus?

These are not easy questions but one thing for certain is that we need not do this discernment alone. Christ is with us, if we so choose.

Our reading from John 1 follows the call of Jesus' first disciples, Simon-Peter and his brother Andrew. They are ready to go as they have seen something in Jesus and know that he is the Messiah. They are ready to go. It is the next day when Jesus finds Philip and says to him, "Follow me." Philip finds Nathanael and says to him, "We have found him whom Moses and the prophets wrote about." Nathanael is skeptical about Jesus' coming from Nazareth but it is Philip who says, "Come and see." What is Philip saying, Come and follow-Change Your Life! The word "come" means that one has to move from where one is to another spot- and to do this is to make a change.

Jesus sees Nathanael coming toward him and describes him “as an Israelite in whom there is no deceit. “ Nathanael asks Jesus where did you get to know me?” I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called to you. Nathanael then states, “You are the Son of God.”

Today we are renewing our covenant by sharing in the words written by John Wesley many years ago The words we will share call us to commit/ re-commit ourselves to Christ's purpose in serving His church and also to growing in our faith as his followers.

When Philip said, “Come and see—he also said come and see—Come and see Jesus as you grow in faith. Jesus says, 'Come' as well, because he wants us to follow. He doesn't just want them us to believe but to commit ourselves to service. We may wonder about this in this moment, but we need not worry.

For what we share today is because we are people of faith and prayer. We need not be afraid, fearful or worry. As long as we offer to God our prayer and share our faith that we will follow and serve, we will grow in faith and know that God's gift of love in Jesus is with us always. John Wesley the founder of Methodism adapted this service for the purpose of the renewal of the Christian believer's covenant with God. The purpose is to renew one's commitment to Christ and the Church at the start of the year.

So let us prepare to do this as followers of Jesus. In order to share in this covenant we prepare ourselves in prayer. We seeking the Spirit to bless, guide and lead us in what we are to do. And to do this, we say the words Come Lord Jesus Come- Bless us O God bless us. Hear my prayer. SILENCE... Amen.