

## Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2024

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us, we worship together in God.

Readings 1 Samuel 3:1-20

John 1:43 - 51

### Reflection

Our reading from Samuel reminds us of the mysteries of God. Samuel is in training with Eli, he is aware of Eli's connection with God and that Eli speaks of hearing God and yet he is totally unprepared for hearing God himself, and it takes Eli a while to realise what is happening.

Sometimes we can be slow to hear God, or at least slow to acknowledge when God is asking us to do something. It is not always a still small voice, God speaks in many and varied ways and through many and varied people. Perhaps you have found different people saying the same thing to you, could that be God calling you to speak or do something?

Many different people had been suggesting to me that I should be a minister but I choose to 'ignore' or not recognise the significance of the suggestion. I had what I thought were good reasons why I should not be a minister. I had been studying for a Maths degree before I started work at the Yardley Hastings Centre but had realised that I had to stop this study, and I was upset at the realisation, however I still did not put two and two together. It was only when someone who did not know me said over lunch – 'you do know you are meant to be a minister' – I realised I had to take this seriously. The rest is history.

It is not always such life changing things that God calls us to do, it may be to campaign for something, to speak out about something or to make a suggestion that becomes Church action. However we can all experience that sinking feeling when we hear something we are not sure we want to share. The feeling Samuel had when he heard what God was going to do. We need to remind ourselves that this was written long after the events described and was explanation rather than prophecy but there are times when we are called to share news that others do not want to hear.

As church we are called to be the voice of creation, we need to campaign for global change to protect the planet on which we all depend. It is our actions, or actions on our behalf that are threatening the sustainability of the planet and affecting the lives of millions who live in the areas already affected by climate change. Do we hear God calling us to do better?

We are all connected by the web of creation, all connected in God whether we acknowledge God or not. As we begin to discover just how connected we are then we hear God's voice in more and more situations.

Philip heard God when Jesus called him to follow him, all those who choose to follow the way of Jesus have heard God's voice and responded. Philip was so startled that he went to find his brother who we read was more sceptical until he actually met Jesus and heard him talk about things he should not have known, until Jesus demonstrated his connection to the web of creation which we call God. Nathaniel acknowledges Jesus and follows him. That is the power of sharing our experience. Philip might not have responded in that way and

Nathanial may never have met Jesus and connected with God. Our sharing has the power to be the voice of God for others, we have no idea of the effect that sharing our experience of God may have but as people of the oneness we are called to share.

When my dad died, my mum came to live with us as she could not live independently. Over time she developed dementia and life was very difficult for all of us. I was exhausted and had to find respite care for my Mum, she died that week. A good friend at church wrote me a letter which she believed God had asked her to write, assuring me that I had done all I could and should feel no guilt. It was a powerful letter and it meant a lot to me that my friend had had the courage to hear and respond to God. She was for a moment connected and through her connection I was reminded of my own connection. Over the years I have explored that connection and through quantum theology now understand more fully the depth of our connection within God. Psalm 139 speaks of that connection and with a new understanding speaks even more powerfully, reminding me that there have always been people who have understood the depth of the connection in a more profound way, the psalmist, Jesus, the writer of John's gospel and Paul, as well as many theologians since.

Paul was responsible for many people from many backgrounds coming to an understanding of God through his sharing of his understanding of the teaching of Jesus. It did not come naturally and we know it took a startling experience for him to hear God speaking. Paul was also aware that sometimes the newly emerging churches got things wrong. We see evidence of this in his letters to the churches, always encouraging but also often challenging. In his letter to the church in Corinth he speaks about the responsibility of those called to be examples of best practice. We can only assume that he has heard that his preaching about the freedom of the message of Jesus has led some Christians to behave in a way that is not entirely following the way of Jesus and he reminds them that whilst something may be lawful it may not always be right or beneficial. He is exploring the importance of choice and he suggests that how we choose to live, how we choose to treat our bodies which are a part of God, speaks louder than words. We should always reflect God's glory in our words and in our actions.

It can be a huge challenge and it requires a real awareness of our oneness in God. Jesus reminded those who followed him that oneness means loving others as if they are ourselves, even those we do not see as friends. This does require us to love ourselves, not in some self righteous way but through the way we treat our bodies. That may be no easier to hear than the call to speak out against injustice but it is just as important. The whole of life is about connection with God.

We are called to listen and to hear. We are called to respond and we can only do this when we take the time to reflect on what we are hearing and what we are seeing and how God is speaking through those experiences. Responding to the call means always being aware, always reevaluating what we believe and journeying ever deeper in our connection with God.