

## Saint Matthew's/San Mateo Episcopal Church

Epiphany 2, January 17, 2021

### READINGS:

I Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)

Psalms 139:1-5, 12-17

I Corinthians 6:12-20

John 1:43-51

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"...Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth..."

In John's Gospel today, Jesus is beginning to choose his disciples, the believers who will spend time with him, do mission and ministry, and see his signs and wonders - the people who will be on a life journey with him.

John tells us simply that Jesus "found" Philip and said to him, "Follow me." And right after that invitation from the Lord, Philip "found" Nathanael and invited him to "Come and see" Jesus. Nathanael is not an easy sell, wondering if "anything good can come out of Galilee," but he does follow Philip to Jesus. When Jesus tells Nathanael that he saw him under a fig tree before Philip called him, Nathanael KNOWS who he is. "Rabbi, you are the Son of God." "You will see greater things than these," Jesus tells him. WE might say today something like, "You haven't seen anything yet!"

In our reading from the First Book of the Prophet Samuel, the career of a young boy called Samuel takes a change of course. Samuel has been dedicated to God's service by his mother Hannah, and is serving with his mentor, the priest Eli, in the temple. Probably Samuel was intended to be a priest too, but a call from God alters that plan. Samuel becomes a great prophet instead.

Saul of Tarsus has a career plan, too. He plans to destroy the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. A meeting with Jesus on the Damascus road changes all that. Saul becomes Paul, a missionary

for the Gospel, and a saint. Today in our reading from his First Letter to the church in Corinth, Paul reminds them, and us, that we have been "bought with a price." Bought with a price to glorify God in our bodies. Bought with a price to continue the work our Lord began.

I am always amazed to read in scripture about the people chosen to work for God's kingdom. They are such a mixed bag, just like us! And yet, look at what they accomplish!

The psalmist reminds us today that God knows us well. He knows the good bits, the bad bits, the ugly bits. He knows the strong and beautiful bits, the "marvelously made" bits. He knows every word we speak. He is "acquainted with" all our ways. ALL our ways! And knowing everything there is to know about us, he sent his son to redeem us and call us to his service, and to lead us home.

We don't have to be perfect to work for the Lord!

Samuel is an inexperienced child, yet in him God sees the makings of a prophet.

Paul is a persecutor of Jesus and his people, yet he becomes a great missionary and saint of the church.

Nathanael is stubborn and doesn't much care for people from Galilee, but he recognizes God when Jesus tells him he saw him under the fig tree.

And just look at us. We all know we have our faults. But God sees our strengths, too, especially when we work with each other.

Often, VERY often, our work for God's kingdom is in the frame of community: a church - a company of followers of the Lord Jesus. We are baptized into that community, and called to work, and pray, and give for the kingdom of God in the company of other followers of the Lord.

I think WORK is the operational word, the call for us. Our Lord reminded his followers (and us) that our job is to continue the work he began.

American author, theologian, and civil rights leader Howard Thurman calls this work - our work - the work of the Church, "The Work of Christmas." Listen to what he says:

### The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,

When the shepherds are back with their flocks,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost  
To heal the broken  
To release the prisoner  
To rebuild the nations  
To bring peace among brothers and sisters  
To make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman

That's a lot of work! Good thing we have all year to work on it!!

All year to be finders and healers.

All year to help release people and rebuild nations.

All year to be peace makers, or makers of music in the heart.

We don't have to be perfect. But we do have to be willing, trusting, and obedient. Epiphany is a season of light, of the "showing forth" of the incarnate God who has come to pitch his tent with us and live with us forever.

The more our lives are illumined with the light of Christ's glory, the more he will be known, worshiped and obeyed to the ends of the earth! I'm thinking we probably haven't seen anything yet!!

Amen.