

## Home Service for January 17, 2021

### Welcome and Announcements

You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

*God knows us better than we know ourselves. God calls us, inviting us on a journey of love.*

### Call to Worship:

We enter with praise and awe, because the God of all has drawn us together. In our worship, we draw nearer to God in our connectedness to one another. Because the many members of the one body have shown that love is a more excellent way of life. How wonderful it is to be in worship one more time.

### Opening Prayer:

Creating God, how deeply you know us. In the mystery of your love, you see who we are and who we might become. Our bodies are your creation; they are wonderfully made. Our spirits are a gift from you. You call us by name and invite us to follow. Lead us now into the depths of your love. Amen.

### Prayer of Confession:

O God, you call to us. We hear you, but aren't sure who is calling. We hear you, but are distracted by many things. We hear you, but are afraid to answer. Open our hearts to your voice. Help us set aside our doubts, our fears, and our distractions, that we may answer you faithfully. Amen.

### Words of Assurance

*God searches us, knows us, loves us, and forgives us. God's love shelters us and keeps us safe.*

Read Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

You have searched me, LORD,  
and you know me.

<sup>2</sup>You know when I sit and when I rise;  
you perceive my thoughts from afar.

<sup>3</sup>You discern my going out and my lying down;  
you are familiar with all my ways.

<sup>4</sup>Before a word is on my tongue  
you, LORD, know it completely.

<sup>5</sup>You hem me in behind and before,  
and you lay your hand upon me.

<sup>6</sup>Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
too lofty for me to attain.

For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

<sup>14</sup>I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.

<sup>15</sup>My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place,  
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

<sup>16</sup>Your eyes saw my unformed body;  
all the days ordained for me were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.

<sup>17</sup>How precious to me are your thoughts, <sup>[a]</sup> God!  
How vast is the sum of them!

<sup>18</sup>Were I to count them,  
they would outnumber the grains of sand—  
when I awake, I am still with you.

## Prayers of the People:

Show forth, O God, in power and peace what you have done and are doing in our world. Before some of us can sing a song of gladness again, O God, we have to get over something. We have a fear of your story, an estrangement from it. Some of us are angry. Some of us are hurt. And no one seems to notice. They keep telling us everything is going to be okay, but still we're hurt. Help us tell the truth without making people even more afraid of us. All some of us want is the day before we were assaulted ... or hurt ... or betrayed ... or our spouse died. And we know we can't have any day back; we know that some days are just gone. And then comes Epiphany, the time when God is revealed. Reveal yourself, O God, to each one of us here. Bring us to your glory and help us move on to new days. In the name of Jesus, who is never far away. Amen.

## Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is The kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

<sup>2</sup> One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. <sup>3</sup> The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. <sup>4</sup> Then the LORD called Samuel.

Samuel answered, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup> And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

<sup>6</sup> Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

<sup>7</sup> Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

<sup>8</sup> A third time the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup> So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

<sup>10</sup> The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything. <sup>13</sup> You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup> By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. <sup>15</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.”<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>17</sup> But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. <sup>19</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 1:43-51

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.”

<sup>44</sup> Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. <sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and told him, “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.”

<sup>46</sup> “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.

“Come and see,” said Philip.

<sup>47</sup> When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”

<sup>48</sup> “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

<sup>49</sup> Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.”

<sup>50</sup> Jesus said, “You believe<sup>[a]</sup> because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.” <sup>51</sup> He then added, “Very truly I tell you,<sup>[b]</sup> you<sup>[c]</sup> will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on’<sup>[d]</sup> the Son of Man.”

## Message

Do you know how sometimes you read scriptures and some line or verse just jumps out at you and makes you think? Well, that is what happened to me this week as I was reading the Gospel. Part of verse 46 did just that: Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” I had to think about it for some time to figure out what it was about it that bothered me so much. Then it came to me, Nathanael had some definite opinions or assumptions about Nazareth when he made that statement.

In Jesus’s day, Nazareth was a small village of about 150 people. It did not have any industry of its own and the people living there were not of what was considered the educated class. If they were able to earn a living, they did it by the sweat of their brow. They struggled horribly to get by and survive. It is thought that they did not feel very good about themselves, nor did they have a lot to aspire to. Scholars tend to agree that the inhabitants of Nazareth were looked down upon by the neighboring towns and cities. To be a Nazarene was an expression of decided contempt, the people were thought to be wicked even. This is the reason he made the assumption that nothing good could come from Nazareth, but we know he was wrong.

By watching the news we have seen places where the people do not have much hope. There could be a lack of education or if there is education not a very good one. There could be drug problems, lack of jobs or even the lack of food and shelter. A place where the people are desperate or perhaps even feeling of hopeless of ever being able to improve the situation. These are many times forgotten places for we do not want to be reminded of them.

Even in our own area, have you ever wondered that same thing about a place or a person or perhaps an entire group or race of people? Perhaps you have doubted yourself and asked the question, “Can anything good come out of me?” or “Can I make a difference?” I have wondered that many times during my life time. Do not get discouraged or think you are not making a positive difference, because you are!

This last Advent season as churches each of you made a difference in someone lives, for as churches two families had a better and brighter Christmas by a church adopting them. I do not think we will ever know how many families were helped by adopting the food shelf and supporting it with food and financial support. This was not something done by one person, but done by the members of both churches each in their own way.

Have you ever wondered how or if God loves you? Well that is easy to answer, YES! God loves you not matter who you are, what you have done, or where you are from! Our Gospel lesson reminds us that God does not see as we see. God's vision is deeper, wider, and more accurate. It is a vision to which Jesus calls us, and helps us to develop. God does not make any assumptions. People of faith, like Nathaniel, you and I, make all sorts of assumptions every day. Sometimes our assumptions are about other people, relationships, state of our country, or particular situations we declare to be hopeless. The assumptions we make can destroy relationships, love and life for often we think we know more than we really do. Assumptions act as limitations, examples are racism, sexism and classism and they narrow our vision. They can close off the possibility of change and growth. They can deny the possibility of reconciliation, healing, a different way of being or a new life. Assumptions can impoverish our faith and proclaim that there is not room for God.

Assumptions keep us from engaging in life, ourselves, each other and God at a deeper level. Countless Bible stories remind us that God uses unusual people and places to do His work. David the youngest son of Jesse was anointed to be King of Israel. Moses who stuttered God chose to be His spokesman to the Pharaoh. Peter who was impulsive and denied knowledge of Jesus God chose to be the leader of the apostles. Paul who terrorized the early Church converted to be its greatest missionary. God takes ordinary, fallible humans and does great things. He created each of us with great potential to be an instrument of His Love and Grace. Do not let assumptions about yourself or others get in the way of being who God has called you to be. Thank goodness God is not limited by assumptions or anyone else's.

Jesus called Nathanael from under the fig tree and he goes. Nathanael chose to give Jesus a chance. He placed himself in a position to meet God. The old assumption fell and a new life and a new world arise. The fulfillment of God's promises and earthly life happened in Nazareth.

The last place we would have thought possible is often the first place God chooses. Our salvation and healing happen where we thought nothing good could happen. Reconciliation and love are revealed in relationships we were certain nothing good could come from. The seemingly hopeless situations of life begin to bear fruit, Words of forgiveness and compassion are spoken by people we were sure could never say such things, for God puts life back together in Nazareth. There was more happening in Nazareth than the world ever thought possible. No just anything good came out of Nazareth, but the One Who is Good came out of Nazareth.

God truly calls us and invites us on a journey of love. Amen.

Benediction:

*God calls to us, interrupting our lives. God needs us to speak words of truth. God asks us to follow. Be Still. Listen for God's voice. God is calling still. Go forth with courage, for God has blessed you. Go in Peace and Serve the Lord. Amen*