

Worship for Sunday 17th January 2021 Ordinary 2

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Call to Worship

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at mine end, and at my departing.

Book of Hours (1514)

Hymn: StF 7 God, who made the stars of heaven

- 1 God, who made the stars of heaven, God who spread the earth,
breath of every living being, fount of life and birth,
you have formed a servant people, led us by your hand.
Light of nations, shine in us; brighten every land.
- 2 Living Christ, the light of nations, radiant as the sun,
build us up, a growing body; knit your church as one.
May our loving be a witness all the world may see.
Send your spirit, bond of peace, source of unity.
- 3 Spirit God, equip your people, all with gifts to share:
messengers to speak the gospel, ministers of care.
So may valleys rise to greatness, mountains be a plain.
Come, surprise us; change our lives; heal each heart in pain.
- 4 So may nations praise your greatness, do your will on earth,
free the captives from their prisons, treat the poor with worth.
So may desert, coast and village sing new songs to you.
Light of nations, fill the world, making all things new.

Ruth C Duck (born 1947) – No relation!

Prayer of Adoration

We praise you, wonderful God, for revealing yourself to your creation.
You did not leave us in the dark about you: your light has illuminated
your nature, just as the sun illuminates your world.

We praise you, almighty God, for revealing yourself to your people.
You spoke through the prophets, and even if people did not heed your
words, you continued to encourage and guide them.

- 4 Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?
- 5 Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

John L Bell (born 1949) and Graham Maule (1958-2019)

Blessing

God, who is calling us into holiness
hold us in your mercy as we learn to be your disciples,
hold us in your grace as we turn again to truth,
hold us in love as we serve in peace and hope:
Keep us faithful, Holy God, keep us true.

Know then that God is with you even as the days look different.
Ask what you can do to make God's kingdom real for someone
through what you do: prayer, chat, acts of kindness, and love.
Know God is at work. **Amen.**

We praise you, Father God, for revealing yourself through your son, Jesus. Through his words and deeds, he showed your finest virtues – mercy, peace and love - and astonished all who saw them.

We praise you, wise God, for revealing yourself through the Holy Spirit. Who inspires us, brings us close to you and binds us to you in love.

We praise you, God of all time and every place, for revealing yourself to us, so that we can know you. **Amen.**

Reading 1 Samuel 3 v 1 - 10

In those days, when the boy Samuel was serving the LORD under the direction of Eli, there were very few messages from the LORD, and visions from him were quite rare. One night Eli, who was now almost blind, was sleeping in his own room; Samuel was sleeping in the sanctuary, where the sacred Covenant Box was. Before dawn, while the lamp was still burning, the LORD called Samuel. He answered, "Yes, sir!" and ran to Eli and said, "You called me, and here I am." But Eli answered, "I didn't call you; go back to bed." So Samuel went back to bed.

The LORD called Samuel again. The boy did not know that it was the LORD, because the LORD had never spoken to him before. So he got up, went to Eli, and said, "You called me, and here I am." But Eli answered, "My son, I didn't call you; go back to bed."

The LORD called Samuel a third time; he got up, went to Eli, and said, "You called me, and here I am." Then Eli realized that it was the LORD who was calling the boy, so he said to him, "Go back to bed; and if he calls you again, say, 'Speak, LORD, your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed. The LORD came and stood there, and called as he had before, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak; your servant is listening."

Prayer of Confession

We are sorry, Word of God, for not listening when you talk to us,
For going our own way and not heeding your voice.
We head into trouble because we don't pay attention to you.
We are sorry for not concentrating on you, for being distracted by other sounds.
We are sorry for not responding to your claims upon our time and treasure.
We are sorry for not thinking you could be calling us as individuals, even us.
We are sorry for not taking notice, when you speak to us through others,
through people who are hurting, crying out for help, longing for love;
You tell us we should 'Look out!' but we keep on looking inwards at ourselves.
In silence, listen for God.

Loving God, we do not belong to ourselves but to you.
Show us what we should do.

Speak, Lord: your servant is listening.

You call to us in the world.
You say to us, 'Follow me . . .'
through a lifetime of loving and giving.
We pray for those who need our friendship:
those who are neglected, needy, misunderstood.

You say to us, 'Follow me . . .'
into the dark places of sin and suffering.
We pray for those who need our support:
those who are ill, sorrowful or afraid.

You say to us, 'Follow me . . .'
into the kingdom of light and joy and peace.
We pray for those who need to hear the message
of the hope to be found in Christ.

Loving God, we do not belong to ourselves but to you.
Show us what we should do.

Speak, Lord: your servant is listening.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Leader, Teacher and Saviour. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn StF 673 Will you come and follow me

- 1 Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown, in you and you in me?
- 2 Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?
- 3 Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean, and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

- 3 Hard decisions may confront us, urging us to compromise;
still obedience is our watchword —

Father, make us strong and wise!

Secular is turned to sacred, made a precious offering,
as our daily lives are fashioned in submission to our King.

Martin E Leckebusch (born 1962)

Prayer of Intercession

Loving God, we do not belong to ourselves, but to you:
you call us by name; you say to us 'Follow me'.

You call to us in the world.

You speak to us through the voices of prophets, politicians and poets.

We pray for those who question our complacency
by speaking out against injustice and oppression.

You speak to us through the voices
of those with whom we work and play and live.

We pray for those we know whose conversations with us
challenge us to show your love in our everyday lives.

You speak to us through the voices
of the needy, the unwanted, the dispossessed.

We pray for the victims of greed and warfare, who cry out to us for help.

Loving God, we do not belong to ourselves but to you.

Show us what we should do.

Speak, Lord: your servant is listening.

You call to us in the world.

You say to us, 'Follow me . . .'

through a lifetime of loving and giving.

We pray for those who need our friendship:

those who are neglected, needy, misunderstood.

You say to us, 'Follow me . . .'

into the dark places of sin and suffering.

We pray for those who need our support:

those who are ill, sorrowful or afraid.

You say to us, 'Follow me . . .'

into the kingdom of light and joy and peace.

We pray for those who need to hear the message
of the hope to be found in Christ.

God who cares, forgive us for not being ready to answer your call on our lives.
Help us to listen out and watch for your loving Word alive in the world today.

Amen

Hymn StF 666 Master, speak thy servant heareth

- 1 Master, speak! Thy servant heareth, waiting for thy gracious word,
Longing for thy voice that cheereth; Master, let it now be heard.
I am listening, Lord, for thee; what hast thou to say to me?
- 2 Speak to me by name, O master, let me know it is to me;
Speak, that I may follow faster, with a step more firm and free,
Where the shepherd leads the flock in the shadow of the rock.
- 3 Master, speak! Though least and lowest, let me not unheard depart;
Master, speak! For O thou knowest all the yearning of my heart,
Knowest all its truest need; speak, and make me blest indeed.
- 4 Master, speak! and make me ready, when thy voice is truly heard,
With obedience glad and steady still to follow every word.
I am listening, Lord, for thee; Master, speak! O speak to me!

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879)

Reading John 1 v 35 – 41

The next day John was standing there again with two of his disciples, when he saw Jesus walking by. "There is the Lamb of God!" he said. The two disciples heard him say this and went with Jesus. Jesus turned, saw them following him, and asked, "What are you looking for?" They answered, "Where do you live, Rabbi?" (This word means "Teacher.") "Come and see," he answered. (It was then about four o'clock in the afternoon.) So they went with him and saw where he lived, and spent the rest of that day with him. One of them was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. At once he found his brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah." (This word means "Christ.") Then he took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "Your name is Simon son of John, but you will be called Cephas." (This is the same as Peter and means "a rock.")

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come with me!" (Philip was from Bethsaida, the town where Andrew and Peter lived.) Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one whom Moses wrote about in the book of the Law

and whom the prophets also wrote about. He is Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth." "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," answered Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, he said about him, "Here is a real Israelite; there is nothing false in him!" Nathanael asked him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you when you were under the fig tree before Philip called you." "Teacher," answered Nathanael, "you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus said, "Do you believe just because I told you I saw you when you were under the fig tree? You will see much greater things than this!" And he said to them, "I am telling you the truth: you will see heaven open and God's angels going up and coming down on the Son of Man."

Address

Do you ever look back on your life and think how different it could have been if you had made other choices? It might be in your career, your faith or your love life. Sometimes it is a single moment that alters the course of our life. So it was for Samuel, and for the fishermen – Andrew, Simon, Philip and Nathaniel. What they said and did at that instant, when they answered the call it set a new course for their future. If it had been ignored they might have regretted it for the rest of their lives.

A vocation (literally a calling) is not limited to those who follow a church ministry – presbyters, deacons, local preachers, etc. In the past public service such as teaching and medicine were seen as more of a vocation than a job, and perhaps in this pandemic we have understood that again by the definition of key workers. A vocation compared to a job, to me at least, is not about how much you earn, but choosing to answer a call on your life from God. Your choice is not self-centred but motivated by something bigger than yourself. But that doesn't have to be a leadership role; everyone has a role to fulfil: see 1 Corinthians 12.28, where those who heal, help and administer are listed alongside apostles and teachers. I couldn't exercise my ministry without the treasurer, Church Council secretary, and pastoral visitors all playing their part. No one is without a calling from God; especially at present, where a phone call and/or a prayer is a great response to need and an answer to God's prompting. When I was first a minister I would sometimes make a pastoral visit and the person would say "How did you know to come? I really needed someone to

visit". I came to realise that when someone's name popped into my head that could well be God sending me a message to visit or ring. If it happens to you, act now, before it is too late, seize the moment and don't regret not taking the opportunity. I can tell you there are plenty of similar regrets in my ministry.

But what about our calling in later life? As I look forward to retirement in a few years' time, I wonder how I will fill my time (though the model railway will help!). My father-in-law was pleased to be able to take more time to prepare for leading worship and to not have to attend governance meetings. A woman who had served as a Local Preacher all her life was struggling to see why her calling seemed to have been revoked. She had the beginnings of dementia and was getting lost as she conducted worship. Reassurance eventually came when she understood that she could still offer a ministry of prayer, and indeed would have more time to do so without the pressures of writing sermons. Many times a vocation is about the small actions as much as the big decisions in life.

Our choices in life are not limited to our early years, although those decisions tend to result in life-long effects – career, romance, faith. But God can call at any time, in many different ways. The important thing about the two Bible accounts today is the openness of those who hear to respond to God's word. God calls us all to be disciples – students, followers, practitioners, activists, reflectors, readers, pray-ers – what is your vocation today?

Hymn StF 660 Called by Christ to be disciples

- 1 Called by Christ to be disciples every day in every place,
we are not to hide as hermits but to spread the way of grace;
citizens of heaven's kingdom, though this world is where we live,
as we serve a faithful Master, faithful service may we give.
- 2 Richly varied are our pathways, many callings we pursue:
may we use our gifts and talents always, Lord, to honour you;
so in government or commerce, college, hospice, farm or home,
whether volunteers or earning, may we see your kingdom come.