

The 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany, Year B – January 17, 2021

If you are using this as part of a home worship service on Sundays, it is suggested that you read and reflect on this at the time indicated for a sermon.

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

For a community that feels that the inspiration of God is absent, this interaction between God and Samuel is ever more extraordinary. Imagine a time when the divine presence was hard to find. Now imagine the gift of hearing God calling your name. Whom does God call? God does not seek out the king, the teachers, or the successful. God's voice calls out to a boy. The boy responds: "Speak, for your servant is listening." The voice of God is diverse; it calls out to many different people and places at different times. It does not discriminate between the deserving and undeserving. When we hear the voice of God, we need only to respond: "Speak, for your servant is listening."

- *What does it mean to hear God's call today? What do you do when it seems that God's word is far away and there is a lack of vision?*

Psalm 139:1-5, 12-17

This is a classic psalm and for good reason. The intimacy of God knowing each and every one of us in this way is the closest we can ever get to truly being known. As humans on this earth, we can never fully know one another – in fact, if we are honest, we may not even truly know ourselves. Because God knows our sitting and rising up and the words on our lips, nothing surprises God. There is not something God will learn later on that will make God change God's mind about us. Being known is complex and nuanced. We may have been betrayed when others have found out things about us, but this passage tells us that there is rest in God being a trustworthy knower.

- *Do you find consolation or shame in being fully known? Does being known by God give us the strength to risk vulnerability with others?*

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Paul often finds himself speaking to conflict. Today, we might consider him to be a conflict mediator. Divisions within the Christian community are inevitable. In fact, this text shows us that conflict has always existed within churches. Does this sound familiar to our own church contexts? Conflict does not necessarily have to be a bad thing. It is often how issues that already exist are being brought to the surface. So how does one speak to this conflict? Paul reminds the Corinthians that we are not our own. Our lives are interconnected. How we choose to live our lives does not just affect us, but others as well. It is in this recognition that God's spirit gently guides us into the way of peace.

- *How do you handle conflict? What is the difference between keeping the peace and making peace? Which do you think God is more concerned about?*

John 1:43-51

American culture is obsessed with leadership. Leadership conferences, books, and podcasts are abundant. There is nothing wrong with good leadership, for leadership impacts culture. Leadership can move systems to be more justice-oriented and equitable. We should all seek to be good leaders in whatever spheres we find ourselves in. Yet, this passage asks, are we good followers? Whom are we following? Jesus says to Philip, "Follow me." Philip finds Nathanael and tells him about this encounter with Jesus. Nathanael is reluctant to follow because he is unsure if anything good can come out of Nazareth. Nathanael does not have to go; he can hold on to his assumptions and continue to hide under that fig tree. "Come and see," says Philip. These simple words of invitation can make a world of a difference. It sure has for me.

- *Who invited you to "come and see"? What does it mean for you to follow Jesus?*

This Bible study, written by Janelle Hiroshige, is provided through "Sermons That Work," at episcopalchurch.org, which offers sermons, bible studies, a lectionary calendar, and links to bulletins and podcasts. Janelle is a third-year MDiv student at Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia.