

Epiphany 2

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Prayer of the Day

Lord God, you showed your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son. As he brought gladness and healing to his people, grant us these same gifts and lead us also to perfect faith in him, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20]

{1} Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. {2} At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; {3} the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. {4} Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" {5} and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. {6} The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." {7} Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. {8} The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. {9} Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. {10} Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." [{11} Then the LORD said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. {12} On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. {13} For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. {14} Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever." {15} Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. {16} But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." {17} Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." {18} So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him." {19} As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. {20} And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD.]

Eli was the priest of the temple of Yahweh at Shiloh (1 Samuel 1:3, and *passim*). Samuel was the son of Elkanah and Hannah (1 Samuel 1:20). Hannah had vowed that if she had a son she would "give him to Yahweh" (1 Samuel 1:11), so she brought him to Eli at Shiloh and left him there saying, "I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD" (1 Samuel 1:28).

Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas, were also priests, but very bad priests, and "a man of God," a prophet, told Eli that Yahweh had withdrawn promise of an eternal priesthood to his family, and would raise up a faithful priest to serve him (1 Samuel 2:27-35). Following the passage designated for this Sunday the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines and Eli's sons were killed (1 Samuel 4:11).

1-10. the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli: As the story unfolds Eli advised Samuel to answer the voice that called him in the night, saying, "Speak Lord, for

your servant is listening." If the reading is terminated here, the point is that unlike the sons of Eli, whose priesthood was inherited, Samuel was "called" by Yahweh.

[11-14]: Yahweh told Samuel that he would fulfill his prophecy concerning the sons of Eli.

[15-20]: In the morning Samuel reluctantly told Eli what Yahweh had told him. Eli accepted what Yahweh had said. Yahweh was with Samuel, and he was known throughout the land as a trustworthy prophet of Yahweh.

If the reading is continued to verse 20 the contrast is between Eli's sons who used their priesthood for their own gain, and Samuel who was known to be a true prophet of Yahweh.

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

{1} O LORD, you have searched me and known me. {2} You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. {3} You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. {4} Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely. {5} You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.... {13} For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. {14} I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. {15} My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. {16} Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed. {17} How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! {18} I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you.

The Psalm was selected to reflect Samuel's attitude toward the call of Yahweh. The singer reflects on Yahweh's involvement in his/her life. Even before (s)he was born Yahweh already knew everything about him/her, and, by implication, had determined what (s)he was to do with his/her life. As the congregation says the Psalm together the ancient words declare our recognition of God's deep involvement in our lives, his knowledge of everything about us, and his purposes for us. Matthew's Gospel ends with Jesus' promise, "I am with you to the end of the age." The Psalm ends with a similar yet different declaration, "I come to the end (of Yahweh's thoughts)—I am still with you."

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

{12} "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. {13} "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. {14} And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. {15} Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! {16} Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." {17} But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. {18} Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. {19} Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? {20} For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

12. All things...: See 1 Corinthians 10:23: "'All things are lawful', but not all things are beneficial. 'All things are lawful'" but not all things build up." The words in single quotes are generally interpreted as a maxim current in the Corinthian congregation, quoted and extended by Paul to introduce criteria by which Christians should limit their absolute freedom. In chapter 10 the context is the vexed issue of whether Christians could eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. In Revelation 2 eating food sacrificed to idols is combined with fornication as teachings of Balaam and Jezebel. Paul introduces a *don't ask* rule (10:25). But the question was still at issue in Corinth. Here the maxim is initially connected with food issues, but then another major issue at Corinth and the issue connected with it in Revelation, fornication, is addressed.

The question of fornication comes up in several places in the Corinthian correspondence: a man living with his father's wife (5:1-13), questions about marriage (7:1-40), extra-marital sexual relations (6:12-20). "Paul's word (*porneia*) means, if strictly taken, prostitution, or traffic with prostitutes; in the New Testament however it is regularly used for unchastity and sexual irregularity of almost any kind." [1]

13. *The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord*: The stomach is meant for food, but the body is meant for the Lord. We will be raised by the Lord (verse 14); our bodies are members of Christ (verse 15). We are united to the Lord, we are one spirit with him (verse 17). A Christian cannot engage in fornication and maintain unity with the Lord. So, Christians ought to "shun fornication!"

18. *the fornicator sins against the body itself*: Our body is "a temple of the Holy Spirit," so the sin against the body is also a sin against the Holy Spirit.

19-20. *you are not your own. For you were bought with a price*: We do not belong to ourselves, we are slaves, therefore our freedom is restrained by the will of the one to whom we belong.

therefore glorify God in your body: This is the goal of the Christian life, not the exercise of some sort of personal freedom.

Although Paul distinguishes between fornication, a sin against the body itself, and other sins, a general principle is laid down. We do not belong to ourselves, we belong to God, and our actions should reflect that reality. We are to consider the impact of our actions on others and act in such a way as to glorify God (10:31-33).

John 1:43-51

{43} The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." {44} Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. {45} Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." {46} Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." {47} When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" {48} Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." {49} Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" {50} Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." {51} And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

44. *Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter*: Peter lived in Capernaum (Matthew 8:5, 14). [2]

45. *the one about whom... wrote*: The one written about in the Old Testament is the anointed one, before whom the faithful prophet will go (1 Samuel 2:35).

47. *an Israelite in whom there is no deceit*: John distinguishes Nathan, an Israelite, who comes to believe in him, from "the Jews" who do not accept and believe in him.

49. *you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel*: The Lord allowed Samuel to anoint Saul as king of Israel because the people had rejected the Lord as their king. In Judah the king's son was anointed with oil and was adopted by God as his son (Psalm 2:7). Nathanael recognized Jesus as the true King of Israel and the true Son of God. It is of no exegetical value, but it is interesting that *Nathan* was the name of David's prophet, and *Jonathan* was his best friend.

the law and... the prophets: This is the first century designation of what we call "The Old Testament."

51. *you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man*: Jacob "dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28:12). The angels ascend and descend on a *ladder*; Jesus says they will ascend and

descend on *the Son of Man*, the link between heaven and earth.

Reflection

In the Prayer of the Day we pray for gladness, healing and faith. God's people respond in faith to God's thoughts and ways, though they are not what we expect. Though Eli had served God faithfully, it was Samuel whom God called. Even though God called Samuel his faithfulness was tested. All things are lawful for God's people, but God's people must have a sense what is beneficial, what is appropriate and seemly. God will reveal his will in unexpected ways. Though nothing good can come from Nazareth, none-the-less from Nazareth does come the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Between the righteousness of the past and the freedom of the future, between the honor of those who come from the proper places and He who calls the least his brothers and sisters, between human goodness and the goodness of God we will seek to choose the will of God. We will always fail, in large measure or small. So our service will always be accomplished by God's grace.

Hymns [3]

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

82 --E--As With Gladness
494 --D--Jesus Calls Us;
403 --I--Lord, Speak to
752v --I--I, the Lord of Sea
311 --P--Wondrous Are Your

770v --P--I Was There to Hear
309 --II--Lord Jesus, Think
492 --G--O Master, Let
177, 335

Prayers of the People [4]

A: The magnificence of God is never fully known. It is our delight to pray, "O God of more to come" and quickly add, "Illuminate us, we pray."

A: For the church, that it may not be stalled by the comforts of the present, but that its people may be ready avenues to Christ. O God of more to come. C: Illuminate us, we pray.

A: For all who serve in the government of Canada, especially our Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, that they may know, understand, and practice the craft of statesmanship to the enhancement of the life of all our people. O God of more to come. C: Illuminate us, we pray.

A: For the Evangelical Lutheran Women, that it may have increased enrollment, young and old, and that it may find new energy for service to Christ and his church. O God of more to come. C: Illuminate us, we pray.

A: For the men of the church, that they may not retreat from a strong and enduring commitment to our Savior, and that they may discover new and creative ways of discipleship. O God of more to come. C: Illuminate us, we pray.

A: For those entering marriage, that they share the worth of purity and the joy of fidelity. O God of more to come. C: Illuminate us, we pray.

P: Lead us continually into a greater understanding of who you are, God. Open to us the greatness of yourself in all we see and do not see. C: Amen.

Or [5]

Presider or deacon

Jesus calls on us to follow him in all the world. Let us call on Jesus for the needs, concerns, and hopes of all peoples.

Deacon or other leader

For the church of Jesus Christ in every place.

For *N* our bishop, for presbyters, deacons, and all who minister in Christ.

For this holy gathering and for all who are called to follow Jesus.

For this country, for all nations and their leaders, and for those who guard the peace.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, prisoners, captives, and their families, the hungry, homeless, and oppressed.

For the dying and the dead.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

Presider

God of mystery, lover of human kind, hear the prayers of your people and keep us ready always to serve as prophets and apostles of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes

[1] C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968, p. 121.

[2] *BA* 51(1988)72-73.

[3] <http://www.worship.ca/text/wpch0203.txt>

[4] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter_b1.txt

[5] <http://members.home.com/oplater/prayer.htm>