

## The Second Sunday of Epiphany –17<sup>th</sup> January 2021



Our Old Testament reading this morning taken from the 1<sup>st</sup> book of Samuel takes me back to my years of teaching in Sunday school – Gods calling to Samuel – one of my favourite stories to tell the children about. Virtually all our teaching related to what the adults did, the adults filled the stories with virtually no mention of children. Here God calls to the boy Samuel, a boy of maybe 10 or 12 years old, often much no much older than the children we had in Sunday school, here the children could relate to God and put themselves in Samuels shoes.

Just as the children could relate to the story, there is much we can relate too as adults. In what 'presence' God is calling is not made clear but the calling of his name is very clear to Samuel. He does not recognise it being God calling to him; he assumes it is the elderly, infirm Eli calling for his help. Being a good boy Samuel attends to Eli not once, not twice but three times before wise old Eli realises it is God that is calling to Samuel. Eli prepares Samuel for how he should respond if God should call a 4<sup>th</sup> time by saying, 'Here I am Lord'. God is persistent and does call a 4<sup>th</sup> time and Samuel responds just as Eli told him too. This poses the questions, How many times has God called us and we did not recognise? Are we prepared for Gods calling when it comes? How many times will God have to call before we respond?

Usually that is the point we end that bit of teaching but this morning we have the opportunity to move to the next 10 verses and given the message God gives to Samuel when he does respond and the responsibility that goes with the message, which must have weighed heavily on such young shoulders, it is not surprising we didn't go any further with our young people. God is not happy with the house of Eli and the message is to be the end of the line for Eli.

Having God on our side is not always a guarantee of an easy life, sometimes we do have to deal with difficult, awkward or painful situations, but, as with Samuel who then 'grew up with the Lord with him', the difference of having God on your side is God will be with us through those difficult times, with us to give us the strength to get through those times.

### Collect for the day

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new; transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

### A reading from the first book of Samuel

**3** 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."

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> On that day I will fulfil against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever.”

<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” He said, “Here I am.” <sup>17</sup> 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.” <sup>18</sup> 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.” <sup>19</sup> As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. <sup>20</sup> And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD

### A reading from the Revelation to John

<sup>5</sup> Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals; <sup>2</sup> and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” <sup>3</sup> And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>4</sup> And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>5</sup> Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” <sup>6</sup> Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup> He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. <sup>8</sup> When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup> They sing a new song:

“You are worthy to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,

for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God  
saints from every tribe and language and people and nation;  
<sup>10</sup> you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God,  
and they will reign on earth.”

### A reading from the Gospel according to John

<sup>43</sup> The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” <sup>44</sup> Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup> 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.” <sup>46</sup> Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” <sup>47</sup> When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” <sup>48</sup> Nathanael asked him, “Where did you get to know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.” <sup>49</sup> Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” <sup>50</sup> Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.” <sup>51</sup> 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.”

### Words from Fr Rodney

What is a miracle? This is a question I have asked myself throughout my ministry. I have gradually come to the conclusion that there are at least two kinds of miracles, those for which there is a possible explanation, and those for which there is no explanation except that they are ‘miracles’. Our gospel reading for today is one for which there seems to be no simple explanation! But does the miracle just lie in Jesus turning the water into wine, or as St. John indicates does it more importantly point to something about who Jesus is in this His first miracle? It may well be that Jesus did indeed turn the water into wine, but what was also important was that He transformed what would have been seen as sign of disapproval from God of this marriage, into something that was an even greater sign of His blessing. The very controversial Bishop of Durham, the late Bishop David Jenkins, taught me many things and one of them was to look for God at work in what most people would regard as very ordinary things, rather than just in the miraculous situations. When it came to this first miracle at Cana in Galilee, he would have said not just to focus on the miracle of the changing of water into wine, but the greater miracle of transforming what would have been seen as a sign of God’s disapproval

into an even greater blessing because Jesus was there! So here is a message for us today, to have Jesus as a living part of our lives not only blesses our lives, but can even transform potential disasters into even greater blessings!

### *Intercessions*

Let us pray

Loving Father as we continue to come together with our brothers and sisters in faith we ask your blessings on all those who worship you today, whether remotely or with others. We pray that the message of hope sent to us in the form of your son, continues to light up our lives bringing us comfort during these difficult times and helping us to remain hopeful for better things to come. We continue to pray for wisdom and guidance for all our Church leaders both here at St Mary's and beyond as they continue to respond to the needs of their communities in such challenging times.

Loving Father we bring before you our world and its many problems. We continue to pray for all those areas of the world struggling without the resources they need to fight the pandemic and all the aid agencies trying to support them. We also pray for all those areas of the world torn apart by violence, hatred and intolerance at this present time and in particular we ask for healing for the United States and pray that its leaders and people find the will and the means to bring about reconciliation and a peaceful transition of power. We also continue to pray for wisdom and guidance for our own government as it attempts to lead us through the current difficulties.

Loving Father we pray for the health and safety of our families, friends and neighbours, especially those we are unable to see at the moment

and give thanks for the many acts of kindness we have experienced in the past week. We continue to pray for all those families under pressure at this time, for our young people worried about their future and for the elderly, housebound and lonely who are particularly vulnerable in these long, dark months. We also give thanks and pray the safety for all our frontline and key workers especially those in our hospitals, care homes and other health and social services.

Loving Father today we think of all those who are sick in body, mind or spirit. We pray particularly for all those suffering from the virus, those who care for them and their worried loved ones. We also pray for all those known to us who need our prayers today .....We ask that they are given the courage, faith and strength that they need at this time. We continue to ask for your blessings on all those who are working on treatments and vaccines and give thanks for the work already done and we pray that the vaccination program continues to reach all those who need it safely and effectively.

Finally loving Father, we bring before you all those who have gone before us, those who have perished in the current pandemic and any known to us that we wish to remember today... We pray for all their loved ones and we thank you that our lives were blessed with the love and friendship of those we held dear. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

In a moment of silence we bring our own prayers to God

The Lords 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, the power and the glory, forever and ever.  
Amen.

