

1 Samuel 3:1-20

John 1:43-51

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

“Wonderful are your works, O Lord.
Night is as bright as day and
darkness is light to you.” AMEN!

Today’s lesson in John’s gospel closes out chapter one.

If you recall, Chapter 1 begins with:

In the beginning was the Word and
the Word was with God, and
the Word was God.

Those words begin chapter one and
today’s lesson closes chapter one.

“So what?” You might ask. :-)

Well, if the Bible teaches us that
God’s Word became flesh, then we come
to an understanding that
the “becoming flesh” means
that the infinite became finite.

For us, that finite one is Jesus.

A Jesus that is so poetically and
beautifully “metaphored” in the first section of
John, but is now (at the chapter’s end)
speaking and acting in

full partnership with the
infinite God. (Pause)

In other words, Jesus is now spreading “good news,”
and while that’s not much of an epiphany.

What is, is that as the chapter
comes to its conclusion, we also
hear his disciples spreading good news. (Pause)

A lot of people who go to churches need
to hear the pastor, priest, or minister
proclaim good news.

We don’t just want good news, we need it,
but as I look out upon all of you, and upon all of
you watching from afar,

I see and hear the way you all proclaim
God’s inclusive love and redeeming grace.

Right? It is not only the pastor’s job to do this. (Pause)

There was a little girl who had a brief line
in a Sunday School Christmas program.

All she had to say was,
“I am the light of the world.”

She rehearsed it until she knew it by heart.

As the program approached she was confident,
but her mother was nervous.

When the little girl saw all of the people on
the night of the program, she also
became nervous and forgot her line.

Her mother, who was seated in the front row,
tried to prompt her.

Carefully, and slowly the
mother's lips formed the words.

"I am the light of the world."

The little girl straightened and with a loud,
confident voice announced,

"My mother is the light of the world!" :-)

In a very real sense, so are we all!

Lights of the world...

As we move into the heart of Epiphany,
the season of manifestation, we are told of
the calling of Jesus' first few disciples.

It is good for us to know that Jesus' invitation
was "Come and see."

Those three words are the words
that Philip said to Nathanael.

“Come and see,” those words don’t mean
that everyone should become pastors,
priests, or rabbis.

Yet, “Come and see” does mean something.

So, since we are all “lights of the world,” then
we can each reflect on how we’ve
been called by Jesus.

When that call came there was likely skepticism.

There was perhaps an ask for other signs or
pleas for clarity, but Jesus kept coming until
he found you.

What we can learn today is that once
we grasp being found then we have
good news to share.

We have a job to do.

There’s a story about a young, brilliant scientist
who was making a number of experiments in
the laboratory on a search for the cure to cancer.

The work was being done in a small,
ill-ventilated room of a basement university and

if those experiments turned out to be successful
then there was every right to hope that
a new way of treating the disease might
be discovered and perhaps later
even eradicating it all together.

The reporter asked the scientist,
“What will you do then?”

With a glow on the scientist’s face,
enthusiasm in their voice, and a gleam in their eye,
the scientist exclaimed,
“I shall tell the whole world.” (Pause)

We can be that person and that can be our voice.

Tell the whole world what God has done.

This God who searches and knows;
calls people by name; and
affirms their value.

We use the words, and
we can be the hands and feet of Jesus. (Pause)

Today, on the weekend where we celebrate
the prophetic voice of
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

And the way his light was extinguished far too soon.

We might recognize the ways that
the Christian church ignored his
proclamation of equality, justice,
dignity and sanctity of the
Black person's life.

Many of us think how we would have
followed King back then.

Would have participated in the sit-ins or
the peace walks through angry mobs
with hostile officers holding back leashed dogs.

Yet, in the back of our minds we wonder,
would we have gone out with him?

It's so easy to say we "would have" done it
than it is to say, "Today, I'll do it."

Still, Jesus sees you and me.

Finds us, encourages us, and expects us
to tell the world about Him.

Tell the world about God that
decided to go to Galilee.

Nazareth, of all places!

Who would have imagined that

God's anointed one would come from
a place so distant from the center of power?

We don't know exactly why Nathanael thought
so poorly about Nazareth, but we understand bias.

In recent excavations, they have revealed
that the small town of Nazareth was
thoroughly Jewish and there is

evidence of quarries and remnants of
an active village of craftspeople.

Based on some of the materials found,
the community was probably religiously conservative,
especially compared to the metropolitan areas
like Sepphoris, which
was just a couple hours' walk away.

The "not knowing" why Nathanael was
so negative toward Nazareth leads us
to ask questions about rivalries.

Were there village disputes or arguments?

Were there derogatory understandings
about education or wealth?

We are not immune to such disputes
be they political or social.

Maybe there was something like the troubling
problem we read about in 1 Samuel.

We are told about a time when a word
from the Lord was rare.

Eli's own children were running roughshod and
stealing from the temple; playing favorites
and hurting others from their places of privilege.

Because of that and probably other things, too,
“the word of the Lord was rare in those days.”

We thought our churches were having a bad time.

The silent voice of God in Israel
must have been excruciating.

But then, the voice of the Lord came
to the young student who
kept the lamp of God lit.

And even though Samuel did not
yet know the voice of the Lord, the voice still
called out to him.

Samuel, the outsider... Eli, the insider.

God came to the temple and
God revealed revealed God's Self to
the least expected.

Thank goodness Eli wasn't so far gone
that (after the third time) he remembered
what to do and so he gave
good advice to Samuel.

The next time you hear the voice say,
"Speak Lord, your servant is listening." (2X)

There was still something essential
to the temple, to Eli, and to his office.

He knew what to do.

The church, like the temple is one of
the only places where the young and
the old make our lives together.

It is a rare thing in our culture to find
a place where four different generations
entangle themselves in mutually
dependent relationships.

What a feeling it is to see the village of
St. Stephen care for one another and
remain open and welcoming to people
that come through the doors desperate

to have a word from the Lord.

Yes Lord, we will come and follow you.

AMEN!