

Thoughts on the Readings of January 17, 2021

The Common Thread Note that as Eli's eyesight was growing so dim that he could not see, the lamp of the Lord had not yet gone out. This was a lamp that burned throughout the night in the tabernacle, but the metaphorical irony should not be lost on us. The omniscient God who knows us before we are born and knows what we will speak before the words form on our lips, continues to do great things, including calling people to ministry, so that his light may still shine in this world. He knows us thoroughly, calling all to follow him. Those who do will see great things, including the opening of the heavens at the coming of the Son of Man. On that day, God will raise us from the dead through the same power as he raised the Christ the Lord.

First Reading - [1 Samuel 3:1-10, 11-20](#) The first Bible I ever purchased was when I was a senior in high school. I got it off the rack across the aisle from body-builder, hot rod, and girly magazines. In that sense, the Word of God seemed to be everywhere in our culture. It seemed to be only a small part of a larger exhibit of communications. Yet, when God calls, one turns his back to one display and focuses on the word of the Lord; it becomes the only word worth hearing. When Samuel was a boy, probably a bit younger than I was, his people were religious but did not seem to heed the Lord. It was therefore extraordinary for Samuel to hear from God and react the way he did. The boy not only listened, he responded. Even after Eli, the priest, told him to go back to sleep, Samuel continued to listen and then inquire of the priest about what he had heard. After the fourth call, Samuel stopped going to Eli, at the priest's counsel, and responded to God's call, saying: "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears." In a Church now overflowing with Bibles, this is how each person should respond when he opens the Book: Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening and will obey.

[Psalm 139:1-10](#) When we come together to worship the Lord, it is good to remember that each of us is always in the presence of God. He knows us even when we rest and sleep. Our thoughts are always known to him; we cannot shake him, even in our dreams. We cannot run away from God's presence. This is frightening to many but for the faithful, it should be a comfort. When we have taken a wrong turn in life and end up where we should not be, God is present. If we end up being on the proposed mission to Mars, God is there. When we are committed to the grave, God is there with us.

Everywhere we go, his hand is upon us. The knowledge of this engagement of God with us is incomprehensibly wonderful.

Second Reading - [1 Corinthians 6:12-20](#) Desperation is a fairly normal response to the sin that surrounds us. On the road to despair is a sidetrack called escape. Some try to leave this world ([1Cor 5:10](#)) in the endeavor to flee immorality. Sin finds us down this lane too. I am reminded of Carlo Carretto, the desert monk, who finished off all the coffee one morning, purposely leaving none for his brothers. One will not escape trespasses even in the wilderness. Proper, Christian flight from sin is not to flee sidelong at the next available exit, but to turn back to the Lord. Instead of clutching immorality, or even giving in to despair, we must take hold of Jesus. Turning again and again to the bosom of Christ is the only sure way to glorify God in this body. In this repentant embrace is the hope of faith in the one who paid the price to ransom us from lives of desperate futility. ([1Pet 1:18-19](#))

Gospel - [John 1:43-51](#) Here is an account of Christ's omniscience. Be sure that the Lord sees us, just as he saw Nathaniel. To this, Nathaniel acknowledged him as King of Israel. Jesus' response was that Nathaniel would see "greater things" than being known from afar.

When we understand that the Son of Man is the opener of heaven, we will know the true greatness of Jesus. Instead of looking to Jesus as one who frees us from captivity to oppressors, we must look to him as Redeemer, the one who frees us from bondage to sin and death.