# Reflection for January 17, 2021: Here I Am!

# Based On 1 Samuel 3:1-10 and John 1:43-51

**Prayer:**

***A Texas pastor has told his congregation they have an "executive order" from God to keep Donald Trump in office and advised them to keep their guns loaded ahead of President-elect***[***Joe Biden***](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden)***'s inauguration.***

***Brandon Burden, the pastor at KingdomLife in Frisco, who is also a member of the Frisco Conservative Coalition and a realtor, spoke in tongues in front of his followers on Sunday. He claimed "prophetic voices" said Trump would be president for another eight years.***

***Burden told church members to carry out the order, saying: "Take down the walls of Jericho. The Lord says your Jericho is Washington, D.C. That's your fortified city."***

***The pastor said people needed to be prepared for any emergency that could take place leading up to Biden's inauguration on January 20.***

***"We are locked and loaded at the Burden house," he said,[[1]](#footnote-1)***

I took that quote from a Newsweek Headline broadcast 3 days ago. It is pretty shocking isn’t it.

We witnessed unequivocal evidence of a very fractured country in the Riots that occurred in Washington January 6th. As more and more data is being gathered from the insurgency, it is abundantly clear just how fragile democracy can be. Extremists, including White Supremist fundamentalists made some very unsettling statements. Pastor Burden’s message represents another face of incredible tension and divisiveness.

The issues are not really political, they are rooted in privilege and entitlement. They are rooted in generations of mistruths, prejudice and selfishness.

I am not sure what translation of the Bible Pastor Burden has at his disposal, but his understanding of God has somehow been poisoned, although I imagine he would argue that point with me. Incredibly, and as unfathomable as it might be, he has an audience, a significant audience.

What that is all about I expect is deeply engrained in culture, history, family roots, social standing and any number of other factors. And I know I am in no way capable of trying to understand that let alone try to explain it. We would need to consult our philosophers, historians, psychologists, psychiatrists, behavioural scientists and sociologists for that. But I am confident God did not send me, or you, into this time and place to be disciples of evil spreading fear and promoting hatred. God didn’t send Pastor Burden into ministry to do that either.

We are not sent into the world to be selfish or greedy. We are not sent to pass judgement on others, nor to decide who are the haves and who are the have nots.

I imagine that is something we can all agree upon. Why then are we sent? Perhaps that is something you don’t think much about.

It seems like Samuel wasn’t thinking about it much either that night when God’s voice woke him. He assumed the voice he heard was his master Eli and Samuel kept answering “here I am.” But as we know the story, God had work for Samuel to do. It was not Eli calling. Samuel had to listen a bit more carefully. Then he heard God’s voice and he replied, “your servant is listening.” From that moment on Samuel would become an instrument of the Holy One. He would become a voice criticizing the abuse of power, unfaithfulness, maliciousness and corruption in his time, through his prophetic ministry.

In one way or another we say the words “Here I am God” in our ministry together. We do that when we join together in worship. When we sing, pray, give our offering, read and reflect on scripture, we are answering that voice that says “Samuel, Samuel!” (Except that the voice is saying Ian, Ian or John, Helen, Martha or any of you that are joining us today). Hello there people, I’m trying to get your attention!

That is the same voice that spoke through Jesus in today’s reading from John. Philip, “follow me,” said Jesus. Philip then says to Nathaniel, “Come and see.” Come and follow me, come and see new possibility, come and see a new way, come and be among those who care for their neighbour and treat them as brother or sister.

Accepting the “here I am,” also, and possibly more importantly these days, is doing simple things like saying, “call me.” Call me and check in. Ask me how I’m doing and I will ask you the same. I’m a little lonely these days. I’m fed up with isolation, wearing my mask and the continued bombardment from the medical stats people. I’m tired of ordering my groceries on-line and I am long past being frustrated that I can’t see my friends and family. It is all too depressing, so call me. I can’t have a hug so I’ll take a phone call. Indeed, our pastoral work is a big part of “here I am.”

We will be able to get together sooner than later. In the interim call one another. And when we are on zoom together, wave at the faces you see on the screen.

Somehow too many individuals who would call themselves believes and disciples of Christ have misunderstood God’s call to Samuel. And it seems to me that to be blunt, they really don’t know the man Jesus that they profess to follow.

How is it possible that the work Samuel is called to do and recognized as prophetic is discarded so easily in support of violence or armed riots? Nothing in Jesus’ ministry would ever support a theology that suggests God, “The CEO in Heaven,” would condone insurrection. That is nothing close to answering “here I am” to God’s voice.

I believe that is an important take away for us gathered here today.

I imagine you all were as troubled as I was at the events that unfolded in Washington on January 6. Likewise, I expect you were shocked by the comments I read at the beginning of this reflection. (And I am not going to mention the author’s name again. I would rather forget it).

Strangely though, praying through these disturbing stories leaves me with renewed hope.

I feel that if I keep saying, “Here I Am God,” that has to be helpful. Here I am to do the best I possibly can. Here I am to treat others with respect and dignity, regardless of who they are, where they are from or what political affiliation they connect with. Here I am to object to abuse, prejudice, racism, corruption and violence. Here I am God, Send Me.

I Am Listening,

And thank you for doing the same this morning. Thank you for listening. Amen

Announce next Hymn.

1. [Texas Pastor Tells Followers to Stock Supplies, Keep Guns Loaded Before Biden Inauguration (msn.com)](https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/politics/texas-pastor-tells-followers-to-stock-supplies-keep-guns-loaded-before-biden-inauguration/ar-BB1cKr3P?ocid=msedgntp) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)