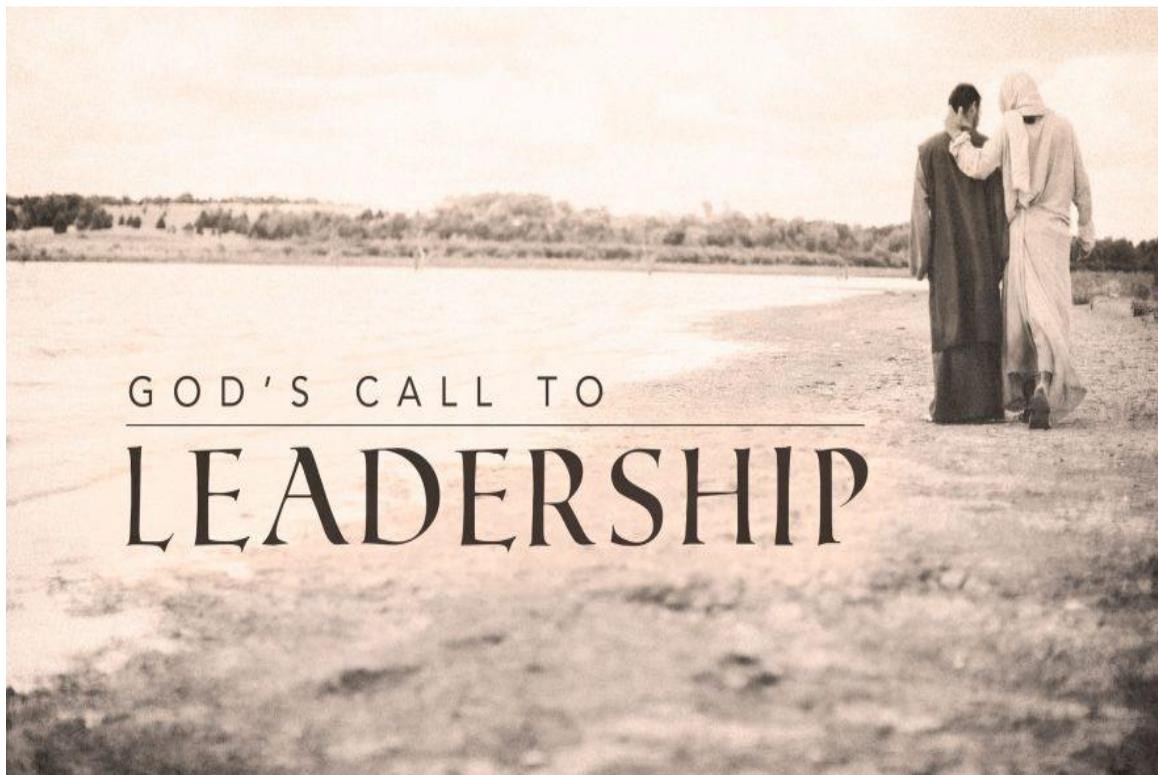


The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”



Second Sunday after Epiphany
January 17, 2021



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Second Sunday after Epiphany

All the baptized have a calling in God's world. God calls not just pastors and deacons but also the youngest child, like Samuel. The story of the calling of Nathanael plays with the idea of place. Nathanael initially dismisses Jesus because he comes from Nazareth. But where we come from isn't important; it's where—or rather whom—we come to. Jesus refers to Jacob, who had a vision in a place he called “the house of God, and . . . the gate of heaven” (Gen. 28:17). Jesus says he himself is the place where Nathanael will meet God.

Prelude *Will You Come and Follow Me* (TILLEN)

Confession & Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as we take time to recognize our shortcomings, while also remembering God's relentless grace.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
whose voice is upon the waters,
whose mercy is poured out upon all people,
whose goodness cascades over all creation.

Amen!

Let us confess our sin, trusting in the abundant grace of God.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy God,
you search us and know us.
You are acquainted with all our ways.
We confess that our hearts are burdened by sin—
our own sins and the broken systems that bind us.
We turn inward, failing to follow
your outward way of love.
We distrust those who are not like us.
We exploit the earth and its resources
and fail to consider generations to come.
Forgive us, gracious God,
for all we have done and left undone.
Even before the words are on our tongues,
you know them;
receive them in your divine mercy. Amen.

How vast is God's grace!
Through the power and promise of † Christ Jesus,
our sins are washed away
and we are claimed as God's own beloved.
Indeed, we are forgiven.
In the wake of God's forgiveness,
we are called to be the beloved community
living out Christ's justice
and the Holy Spirit's reconciling peace.
Amen!



1 O Zi - on, haste, your mis - sion high ful - fill - ing,
2 Pub - lish to ev - 'ry peo - ple, tongue, and na - tion
3 He comes a - gain! O Zi - on, ere you meet him,



to tell to all the world that God is light;
that God, in whom they live and move, is love;
make known to ev - 'ry heart his sav - ing grace;

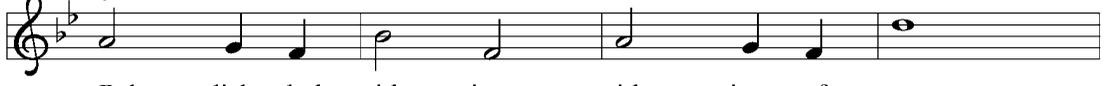


that he who made all na - tions is not will - ing
tell how he stooped to save his lost cre - a - tion
let none whom he has ran - somed fail to greet him,



one soul should per - ish, lost in shades of night.
and died on earth that we might live a - bove.
through your ne - glect, un - fit to see his face.

Refrain



Pub - lish glad tid - ings, tid - ings of peace,



tid - ings of Je - sus, re - demp-tion, and re - lease.

Text: Mary A. Thomson, 1834–1923
Music: ANGELIC SONGS, James Walch, 1837–1901

Prayer of the Day

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful redeemer, for the countless blessings and benefits you give. May we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day praising you, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen!**

First Lesson

1 Samuel 3:1-10

At a time when visions are rare and unexpected, the Lord comes to Samuel and calls him to speak the divine word. Though just a boy, Samuel responds to God obediently, as Eli the priest has taught him to respond. This marks the beginning of Samuel's prophetic ministry.

¹Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

²At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; ³the 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. ⁴Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" ⁵and 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. ⁶The 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." ⁷Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸The 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. ⁹Therefore 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.

¹⁰Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

Psalm

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

¹LORD, you have searched me out;

O LORD, you have known me.

²**You know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.**

³You trace my journeys and my resting-places
and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴**Indeed, there is not a word on my lips,
but you, O LORD, know it altogether.**

⁵You encompass me, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

**⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain to it.**

¹³For you yourself created my inmost parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

**¹⁴I will thank you because I am marvelously made;
your works are wonderful, and I know it well.**

¹⁵My body was not hidden from you,
while I was being made in secret and woven in the depths of the earth.

**¹⁶Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb; all of them were
written in your book;
my days were fashioned before they came to be.**

¹⁷How deep I find your thoughts, O God!
How great is the sum of them!

**¹⁸If I were to count them, they would be more in number than the sand;
to count them all, my life span would need to be like yours.**

Second Lesson

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Paul helps the Corinthians understand that God has claimed the entirety of their lives through the death of Christ. Hence Christian relationships and conduct, including areas of human sexuality, are to reflect the reality that we belong to Christ and that the Holy Spirit lives within us.

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. ¹⁴And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. ¹⁵Do 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! ¹⁶Do 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.” ¹⁷But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. ¹⁹Or 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? ²⁰For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

Gospel

Mark 1:4-11

In John's gospel, Jesus' ministry begins with the call of disciples, who then bring others to Jesus. Philip's friend Nathanael moves from skepticism to faith when he accepts the invitation to "Come and see."

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

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *The Son of God, Our Christ*

#584



1 The Son of God, our Christ, the Word, the Way,
2 In ev - 'ry test, in tri - als man - i - fold,
3 To - day, as then, Christ sum - mons us to dare
4 In cit - y street, in town, or on the soil,
5 Wher - e'er we find our wit - ness should be made,



shared hu - man life and toiled through - out the day;
these ser - vants wit - nessed, by their faith made bold;
to fol - low bold - ly and his work to share,
may each serve Christ in faith - ful dai - ly toil,
what - e'er our task, be thou, O Christ, our aid,



from com - mon folk he called the twelve to be
and with the gifts and tal - ents which they brought
to help and heal the sick, the blind, the lame,
and in each thought and kind - ly word and deed,
that we may glad - ly give for thee our best



co - work - ers in his sa - cred min - is - try.
the church was found - ed and God's mes - sage taught.
de - clar - ing to the world his ho - ly name.
o - bey Christ's call and go where he shall lead.
and find each task di - vine - ly sent and blest.

Text: Edward M. Blumenfeld, b. 1927, alt.

Music: SURSUM CORDA, Alfred M. Smith, 1879–1971

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Music © 1941 Historic Church of the Ascension, Atlantic City, NJ, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

Prayers of Intercession

As this week we observe the Week of Prayer for Christian unity, let us offer our laments and petitions to God, responding to each with the words “In mercy, receive our prayers.”

A brief silence.

O God, we lament the times when our churches have rejected collaboration with your worldwide family of grace, and so we ask your blessing on the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Protestants, evangelicals, and independents; that all your people will follow your call to discipleship and grow deeper into our unity in Christ. O God, Shepherd of your people, hear our cries. **In mercy, receive our prayers.**

We lament the ways that we and our society have misused your earth with selfish or short-sighted actions. Inspire us to increase our commitment to the care of your marvelous creation. O God, Gardener of the globe, hear our cries. **In mercy, receive our prayers.**

We lament the uncontrolled rage and the senseless violence that recently defaced our nation. Instill peace to reign in our streets, that our capital cities be safe, and that a spirit of reconciliation and cooperation mark the next stage of our national life. O God, Peacemaker in our land, hear our cries. **In mercy, receive our prayers.**

We lament the decades of ethnic injustices and racial prejudice that brought such suffering to many residents of our country. Bless the Indigenous peoples, descendants of Africans, and all immigrants to this land, and that you form us into a nation in which all are honored in equal measure. O God, Liberator of the oppressed, hear our cries. **In mercy, receive our prayers.**

We lament the unspeakable sadness that has been unleashed by the coronavirus here and around the world. Bring health to the sick, comfort to the dying, resilience to health workers, prompt vaccinations to everyone, and a lasting end to this scourge. O God, Physician and Nurse, hear our cries. **In mercy, receive our prayers.**

We lament the lives of those who have died, in storms, in riots, and in sickbeds. We praise you especially for the life and legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. At the end, may we join with all the members of your family in your presence. O God, eternal Arms of Mercy, hear our cries. **In mercy, receive our prayers.**

Into your hands, O loving God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen!**

Music Interlude *O Zion, Haste* (BUSAROW)

Please use this time to meditate or pray for those dear to your heart.

Thanksgiving for the Word

Holy God,

Light of the universe, Teacher of truth, Giver of goodness,
we hear your Word in the scriptures,
proclaiming to us your wisdom
and inviting us to follow your call.

For speaking this Word, we thank you, O God.

We thank you, O God!

Your Word came among us in Jesus, our brother,
who preached your righteousness, healed the sick,
and revived the brokenhearted.

For giving us this Word, we worship you, O God.

We worship you, O God!

Holy Spirit, bless all who receive this Word,
that upheld by the mystery of the body of Christ,
we may be light for the world,
revealing the brilliance of the Messiah.

For sustaining us with your Word, we praise you, O God.

We praise you, O God!

Blessed are you, holy God,
around us, with us, and in us,
now and forever. **Amen!**

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those

who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

Blessing

God the creator strengthen you;
Jesus the beloved fill you;
and the Holy Spirit the comforter † keep you in peace. **Amen!**

Sending Hymn *Songs of Thankfulness and Praise*

#310



1 Songs of thank-ful - ness and praise, Je - sus, Lord, to thee we raise;
2 Man - i - fest at Jor - dan's stream, proph - et, priest, and king su - preme;
3 Man - i - fest in mak - ing whole weak - ened bod - y, faint - ing soul;
4 Grant us grace to see thee, Lord, pres - ent in thy ho - ly word;



man - i - fest - ed by the star to the sa - ges from a - far,
and at Ca - na wed - ding guest in thy God-head man - i - fest;
man - i - fest in val - iant fight, quell - ing all the dev - il's might;
grace to im - i - tate thee now and be pure, as pure art thou;



branch of roy - al Da - vid's stem in thy birth at Beth - le - hem:
man - i - fest in pow'r di - vine, chang - ing wa - ter in - to wine;
man - i - fest in gra - cious will, ev - er bring - ing good from ill:
that we might be - come like thee at thy great e - piph - a - ny,



an - thems be to thee ad - dressed,
an - thems be to thee ad - dressed, God in flesh made man - i - fest.
an - thems be to thee ad - dressed,
and may praise thee, ev - er blest,

Dismissal

Go in peace. Be the light of Christ!

Thanks be to God!

Postlude *Immortal, Invisible* (PETERSON)

Praying Together

... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating: Gayle Agg, Bob Buettner, Alexis Carr, Joan Clarke, John Crawford, Nicole Crawford, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Nealie Gage, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Judy Jones, Dylan King, Jason Lanese, Andrea Lanzalaca, Sara Mendes, Phyllis Nemeth, Bernice Novak, Don Rusher Jr., Arlene Stoltz, Tim Susanek, Tom Susanek, Phyllis Treichel, Phyllis Welker, Linda Wright, Wilma Dancy, Bill Helmick, Nancy Helmick, Robert Lambrecht, Kim (Novak) Leonhardt, Laura Mele, Judy Morgan, Kris Sandor, Bill Wilkens, Eugene Winfrey, the Copeland/Lane Family

LAST WEEK

General Fund receipts for week ending 1/10/2020: \$1427

To the glory of God, and in loving memory of Don Schirmer, a memorial was given by Sidney & Elaine Waldstreicher.

Lectionary Blog: Sharing with Family



Image: iStock.com/Borisova Uliua

This week's readings offer two contrasting tales of family responses to the kingdom of heaven.

The story of Eli and Samuel occurs against the backdrop of the priest at Shiloh failing to properly instruct his sons and co-priests in the ways of the Lord. The corrupt priests were taking and consuming the bits of sacrifice that they liked before the choicest, fattiest bits had been roasted for God. This practice invalidated the Israelites' sacrifices. It also demonstrated a disrespect for God's law and a contempt for the people they were supposed to be serving and representing before God. As if this weren't enough, Eli's sons even raped the women who were officiating/guarding at the entrance to the tabernacle (1 Samuel 2:22).

Eli only became concerned about his sons' behavior when he heard from the community that their misdeeds were well-known (23). His rebuke of his sons was occasioned by social pressure, not by the concern of a senior priest closely monitoring his subordinates' important work. Tales of priests and ministers abusing their roles and preying on the people when they should have been praying to God is an old story and, sadly, nothing new. God was horrified by this behavior and resolved to remove Eli's whole family from their priestly duties, as well as end their lives prematurely (30-34). Conveying this oracle of punishment for spiritual abuse was the first message of Samuel's long prophetic career.

The old priest Eli utterly failed his sons and their victims. His physical blindness that introduces chapter 3 is a not-so-subtle metaphor of his spiritual blindness to the ways of God, especially when the reader is told explicitly that the word of the Lord was not common and there weren't many visions (1 Samuel 3:1). But when God came and stood next to Samuel (!!!), calling his name (10), the young boy knew what to say because of Eli's belated instructions.

The next day, Eli pointedly addressed Samuel as "my son" (16) when he demanded that the boy tell him the content of God's message—knowing for certain that God's words, through the new prophet Samuel, wouldn't be positive for his family.

The Gospel reading presents a healthier picture of familial responses to the call of the kingdom. When Jesus set out from the Jordan to return to the Galilee, where he would see Peter and Andrew (I think Jesus already knew them, John 1:40-42), he called for Phillip to come with him (John 1:43). Phillip was anxious to tell his family about the Messiah, and he invited his brother Nathanael to “come and see” if anything good could come out of Nazareth.

Nathanael, after hearing only a few words from Jesus, exclaimed: “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (John 1:49). Aside from the holy family and those at the temple during Jesus’ dedication, Nathanael seems to have been among the first to understand who Jesus truly was.

Nathanael’s witness was due entirely to his brother’s evangelizing to his family members. Phillip and Nathanael, Andrew and Peter, James and John—Jesus’ early disciples came as family units. All their faithfulness in embracing the kingdom for themselves and their families when presented with the opportunity stands in stark contrast to the example of Eli and his sons.

Obviously, each person is an individual, and even the holiest, saintly parent or sibling will experience disappointments and hurt with their family. We aren’t responsible for the work of the Spirit in turning hearts, minds and lives around. But we are blessed to have opportunities to share the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23) that comes from God’s Spirit with our kin. When we experience good news of God’s love, we have the opportunity to share it, first of all, with our families.

This, and other resources for the journey of faith, available at LivingLutheran.org.



Cory Driver is a minister of word and service, and the director of the Transformational Leadership Academy in the Indiana-Kentucky Synod. He earned his doctorate in Jewish religious cultures from Emory University, Atlanta. Cory lives with his family in Indianapolis.

Guidelines for Speaking Truth

As Lutherans, we're intimately familiar with call-and-response. A worship leader says, "The Lord be with you." We respond, "*And also with you.*" Lift up your hearts. *We lift them to the Lord.* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. *It is right to give our thanks and praise.*

These words are etched into our collective consciousness. We respond when prompted. So it is with this occasion in our national narrative. We must respond. And the response cannot be of God unless it is couched in words of peace with justice and reconciliation.

The Lord be with you in your response, because only by wishing God's presence into the midst of our dialogue can we bridge the ideological divides that cripple our individual and collective growth in community. It's not enough to simply spout off on Facebook or unfriend anyone who disagrees with your venting. Your response might require calling elected officials. It might call you to have nuanced and loving conversations with relatives whose ideas are markedly different from yours, committing to loving them even if and when they refuse to change their beliefs in the face of real and compelling data.

Lift up your hearts before initiating your response, because the psalmist reminds us every Ash Wednesday that "a broken and contrite heart" will not be despised by God. God is present in brokenness. God can take what little we offer and inspire us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. Those of us who identify as white must discern how and when to speak. We must check our own privilege and bias at the door. Most importantly, we must assume the best intentions of our siblings of color, even when they respond in ways that make us uncomfortable (this dis-ease might be the Spirit at work, after all).

Finally, **let us give thanks to the Lord our God.** Only through framing our response as an act of praise will we gain focus and proper intent. If we respond to acts of destruction, violence and hatred with the love of God and neighbor first and foremost, even our mistakes will be better than attempts wrought through our own vainglorious sense of ambition or righteousness. Disavowing our need to be right to be in relationship is easier when we strive to see people as God sees them. This is so difficult because it subverts everything we assume about piety and righteousness. Yes, people must be held accountable for their actions, but no one is beyond God's grace.

We must respond, people of faith. We must respond to this and other violent actions by faithfully engaging with our neighbors in a way that signals peace, tempered by accountability and wisdom to discover the truth. May God be with us—and also with our neighbors—as we seek to serve in these extraordinary times.

Excerpt taken from “My take: we must respond” (Jan. 11, 2021) on LivingLutheran.org.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Otto Zimmann is an adjunct professor of church and society at United Lutheran Seminary, Gettysburg campus. He holds a Ph.D. in American culture studies.

The Call of Samuel

And the Lord came and called as before, “Samuel! Samuel!”
 And Samuel replied, “Speak, your servant is listening.”
 1 Samuel 3:10 (NLT)

Based on 1 Samuel 3:1-10



S E R V A N T V I S I O N S C
 N Z J W L W V E G A F W E Q P
 H H H L V J G E M C A W Z M S
 S O L O N R A L W P U R I U T
 G A W R P P B C J D L K K F H
 L V M D Y J O S Z S A E Q J I
 Y I J U R M Y W S E Q B Y E R
 N Z S G E E Y L W O U W I F D
 T I A T E L V R I I C L M R P
 R N G E E V J E Y E S Y R M M
 N Q I H J N L F A S U S A N E
 V C G C T S I W X L P L L C V
 A G A E J E G N O Q E E F G I
 D L N L L E U E G R K D A Y D
 U E D E L I X G T Z D B K K P

LAMP	WORD	VISIONS	EYES	SERVANT
BOY	SPEAK	CALL	REVEALED	LORD
NIGHT	SAMUEL	LISTENING	WEAK	ARK
LIE	SEE	TEMPLE	THIRD	ELI