

**Second Sunday after the Epiphany**  
**January 17, 2021**

I ask that we pray for each other this week. Pick a friend and pray for them this morning. We are all tired and perhaps suffering a bit from what I heard someone call “compassion fatigue.” Pray for the strength to keep doing the work that needs to be done, and pray to remember that we are God’s hands in the midst of it all.

In the life of the church, I ask you to pray for Jaqueline “Jackie” Sandmo, who passed last Wednesday – she will be buried in a private service this coming Tuesday. May God grant her and her family lasting peace.

Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
*And blessed be God’s kingdom, now and forever. Amen.*

Let’s pray this together.

*Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

The Lord be with you.  
*And also with you.*

Let us now pray together the collect of the day.

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ’s glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

**First Lesson**

**1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20)**

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.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; 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. Then the Lord called, “Samuel! Samuel!” and he said, “Here I am!” 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. 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.” Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. 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.

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.

Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” [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. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 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. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever.”]

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. But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” He said, “Here I am.” 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.” 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.”

As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.]

## **The Response**

### **Psalm 139:1-5, 12-17**

#### ***Domine, probasti***

1 Lord, you have searched me out and known me;  
you know my sitting down and my rising up;  
you discern my thoughts from afar.

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

3 Indeed, there is not a word on my lips,  
but you, O Lord, know it altogether.

4 You press upon me behind and before  
and lay your hand upon me.

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

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

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

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

15 Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb;  
all of them were written in your book;  
they were fashioned day by day,  
when as yet there was none of them.

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

17 If 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.

## **The Epistle**

### **1 Corinthians 6:12-20**

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

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John.  
*Glory to you Lord Christ.*

### **John 1:43-51**

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

*Praise to you Lord Christ.*

### **A Reflection**

May the words written and the prayer of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. *Amen.*

The term “snap judgment” comes to mind when considering today’s readings. We hear in the Gospel, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” In the reading from Samuel, we hear Samuel say, “Here I am!” and he runs to Eli, saying, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So he went and lay down. 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.”

A small part of me believes that Eli must have felt a little bit like, “OK, Kid, I’m tired, go lie down and stop bothering me!” But that, too, would be a snap judgment, both on his part and on mine.

But let’s stay for the moment with “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” For that matter, I’m sure some people wonder if anything good can come out of Woburn. I am very aware that there are people who assume equally that nothing good can come out of Gloucester. It’s a hard place sometimes and may seem not prone or likely to produce anything good.

In the Psalm, there is a word that comes up that we don’t use very often. Reference is made to God “discerning” our thoughts from afar.

To discern or apply discernment is defined as follows: one, the ability to judge well and, two, the definition is (in Christian contexts) “perception in the absence of judgment to obtain spiritual direction and understanding.

In short, if you apply discernment, you are avoiding the snap judgment and looking deeper. As a postulant for the priesthood, you enter a process of discernment to look deeper and make sure you have a call to this work. (And this can be a long and prayerful process!)

If you are Eli, and you apply some discernment to what is happening with Samuel, you recognize he is not just avoiding bedtime. After discernment, Eli offers, “It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him.”

With discernment, we can see obviously good things come out of Nazareth – because the Lord comes from there! Something Nathanael recognizes when he says, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

But Jesus seeks further discernment when he asks, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.” The work of discernment seems to never end.

In other words, pay attention – don't leap to judgment. Keep your eyes and your heart open and then "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

When we do not discern is when snap judgment is often put into play. Discernment takes time, without question, but the results of discernment take us so much deeper into that which we consider.

In a discussion this past week, I was introduced to the phrase "contempt prior to investigation." This approach (from the AA *Big Book*) suggests a closed heart and mind. If your mind is already made up before you explore something, how do you grow? How do you learn new things? How do you explore the gifts that this world has to offer? A friend of mine calls it "willful ignorance." (I believe we were discussing politics.) The danger of this can be quite blinding.

So, again, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Of course! Can anything good come out of Woburn? Yes, if we are willing to try.

The deeper question is, can anything good come out of us? Really, it's up to us.

Perhaps after a little discernment, we can see how.

*Amen.*

Let us now confess our sins against God and our neighbor, praying together:

*Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.*

Let us end by praying as our Lord Jesus Christ taught us. Pray this as you will, out loud or to yourself – just know that God hears you.

*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,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.*

We will continue with the prayer of Spiritual Communion. This prayer was written by St. Alphonsus de Liguori. This prayer is now often used when the church is in a place of fasting from Communion, and I have heard this used in many of the on-line services being offered. We will be using this prayer in place of Communion as we work on regathering, too.

*Jesus, I believe that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. I love you above all things, and long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.*

We may not be able to formally gather, but I wanted to share some images from last week's baptism. It was quietly delightful. There were only six adults present, and Quinn, of course. The congregation was missed, and I look forward to when we can all meet again and celebrate Quinn!

Yours in Christ,  
Dave+

