

Service for the second Sunday of Epiphany.

Almighty God, who called your Church to witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted up on the cross, and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Hymn: God is working his purpose out

God is working his purpose out
as year succeeds to year,
God is working his purpose out,
and the time is drawing near;
nearer and nearer draws the time,
the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of
God as the waters cover the sea.

What can we do to work God's work,
to prosper and increase the love of God in all
mankind,
the reign of the Prince of Peace?
What can we do to hasten the time,
the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of
God as the waters cover the sea?

From utmost east to utmost west
wherever feet have trod,
by the mouth of many messengers
goes forth the voice of God,
'Give ear to me, ye continents,
ye isles, give ear to me,
that the earth may be filled with the glory of
God as the waters cover the sea.'

All we can do is nothing worth
unless God blesses the deed;
vainly we hope for the harvest-time
till God gives life to the seed;
yet nearer and nearer draws the time,
the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of
God as the waters cover the sea.

Arthur Campbell Ainger (1841-1919)

Old Testament Lesson: 1 Samuel 3. 1-10

God calls Samuel

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.'

This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Hymn: I come with joy, a child of God

I come with joy, a child of God,
forgiven, loved and free,
the life of Jesus to recall,
in love laid down for me.

The Spirit of the risen Christ,
unseen, but ever near,
is in such friendship better known,
alive among us here.

I come with Christians far and near
to find, as all are fed,
the new community of love
in Christ's communion bread.

Together met, together bound
by all that God has done,
we'll go with joy, to give the world
the love that makes us one.

As Christ breaks bread, and bids us share,
each proud division ends.
The love that made us, makes us one,
and strangers now are friends.

Brian Wren (b.1936) © 1971, 1995 Stainer & Bell Ltd

Gospel: John 1. 43-51

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.
Glory. to you, O Lord.

Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael

The next day 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 towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come 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.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon: Revd Marjorie Warner

Some years ago, the church where I worshipped was thinking hard about its future and the current needs of its congregation. There were ambitious plans put forward, which would need ambitious funds also!

As but one way to engage newer folks, invitations were sent out for Sunday lunch meetings where there would be tasty food, short presentations, question & answer sessions.

On one such occasion, I was preparing & serving food with others in the open kitchen. Parents came with young children, and as often, the children got busy with their own activities.

Just before dishing up, the children were encouraged to get ready and wash their hands etc. As I approached a group of littlies outside the washroom, one pre-schooler looked at me, very negatively and accusingly said: "You're the cooker!" It was one way to be reminded of my responsibilities, so I turned and went back to my place in the kitchen!!

In the 10th Century BCE the times in the bible lands were troubled. The Philistines were becoming more of a threat to the tribal inhabitants and eager for more land. The tribes had no real leader, but a succession of judges of varying effectiveness. The traditions of religious ritual and sacrifice seemed important for some- but who was really attuned to the current spiritual realities and God's word?

Elderly High Priest Eli of the well-visited Shiloh shrine was honoured- but it was a different matter concerning his sons! Eli knew of the immorality of Hophni and Phineas, and had known his own failure to address their behaviours. As priests also, Eli's sons were dishonouring God's name, as well as their family's and the priesthood.

Enter the small boy, Samuel. As the first and longed-for son of Hannah & Elkanah he was surprisingly brought to live and work with Eli. A small boy who has already begun to learn about God as always in their midst, a small boy who learns more about listening to God, and speaking truth; a small boy called to speak out a hard and painful message to Eli about the consequences of moral failure. And Samuel continues to grow in truth so that his godly qualities become sought-after. OT story follows OT story, kings come and go, prophets come and go- all with that constant tacking thread of God's challenge, concern and offer of forgiving love. But- is natural, human weakness and wrong-doing always to be so intractable? Can amends never be made and good prevail? Yet, there was hope still, and faith.

Enter a New Testament child, one thousand years later. One also brought to God when very young. One who from an early age recognises the voice of God and grows to live his short life guided and empowered by this truth. The times are still hard. The Romans are eager for lands and power. The religious leaders are accused of double standards. Where is the national leader of honour?

And so rather improbably, in the world's terms, Jesus of Nazareth enters centre-stage in a distant place. But only briefly. Yet his Father's offer of holy Kingdom feasting and living for all, forgiveness and reconciliation bursts out of the book and into all time. You and I are invited to his supper, and he will wash our feet.

Our times are still hard in different ways, especially with the virus- but also in much the same ways. We are all susceptible to weakness and failure. Perhaps our own greatest responsibility is ever to accept we are members of Christ's Family-to accept our need of generous love and merciful forgiveness. To accept that those around us are Family too, and to aim to treat them as sons and daughters of the Holy One. Perhaps we are drawn into trying to do too much! I doubt that the little pre-schooler knew much about theology, but he raises a question for me nonetheless. Is it really my "Christian" role to try to run the show alone?

Jesus sets an example with his called disciples. The always- emerging church is to develop through a communal and spiritual empowering. And always look beyond herself. She may continue to be called forward in surprising ways. The last year has really shown us novel service and sacrificial service. We are growing into Family with a new spurt, aiming that all may feel mutually valued and included.

But we need to keep on listening. And then with discernment, with God's empowerment, make our response.

Hymn: Will you come and follow me

Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown,
in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

John L Bell (born 1949) and Graham Maule (1958-2019) © 1987 WGRG, www.wildgoose.scot

Intercessions

In our prayers we especially remember:

Jim and Sheila Allan, Joyce Wheeler (who moved into Boroughbridge Manor over Christmas), Rosemary Hazel (who has just been taken into Harrogate Hospital with heart problems), Lucy (Jane Barker's granddaughter who is in hospital), everyone working to combat the effects of Covid

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray to the Father.

God of our salvation, hope of all the ends of the earth,
we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That the world may know Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace,
we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That the Church may be one in serving and proclaiming the gospel,
we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That the Church may be generous in giving, faithful in serving, bold in proclaiming,
we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That all who are estranged and without hope may be brought near in the blood of Christ,
we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That the Church may welcome and support all whom God calls to faith,
we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That all who suffer for the gospel may know the comfort and glory of Christ,
we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

That the day may come when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is
Lord,
we pray: **Your kingdom come.**

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth:
grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may ever be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer,
and know ourselves surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy; through Jesus Christ our
Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: Alleluia! sing to Jesus

Alleluia, sing the Jesus!
His the sceptre, his the throne;
alleluia, his the triumph,
his the victory alone:
hark, the songs of peaceful Sion
thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus out of every nation
hath redeemed us by his blood.

Alleluia, bread of angels,
thou on earth our food, our stay;
alleluia, here the sinful
flee to thee from day to day:
Intercessor, Friend of sinners,
earth's Redeemer, plead for me,
where the songs of all the sinless
sweep across the crystal sea.

Alleluia, not as orphans
are we left in sorrow now;
alleluia, he is near us,
faith believes, nor questions how:
though the cloud from sight received him,
when the forty days were o'er,
shall our hearts forget his promised,
'I am with you evermore'?

Alleluia, King eternal,
thee the Lord of lords we own;
alleluia, born of May,
earth thy footstool, heaven thy throne,
thou within the veil hast entered,
robed in flesh, our great High Priest:
thou on earth both Priest and Victim
in the eucharistic feast.

William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898)

Closing Prayer

Eternal God, giver of love and power, your Son Jesus Christ has sent us into all the world to preach the
gospel of his kingdom: confirm us and bless us in this mission, and help us to live the good news we
proclaim; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

God bless! Stay safe!