

John 1.43-end; 1 Samuel 3.1-10; Ps. 139; Revelation 5.1-10  
8:00 a.m. & 10:00 am at St. Andrew's Totteridge  
2nd Sunday of Epiphany: 18th January 2015.

*May the words of my mouth...*

‘Come and see’

The Second Sunday of Epiphany, and you need no reminder from me to tell you that this season is all about Revelation, about having understanding suddenly revealed. The effects of this are reflected on by the psalmist in Psalm 139.

Trying to cope with both wonder and terror, the psalmist meditates on what it is to be known by God. On one hand, he calls us to marvel at the purposefulness of God ever searching us out, and on the other, reflects on how we are known whether we want to be or not, even if we might try to hide.

To coincide with this we have the extraordinary and wonderful story of the calling of Samuel from the OT, ‘**an event that tells us much about the limits of what we see in relation to the information at our disposal.**’ This is the moment that, at Eli’s insistence, Samuel takes on the responsibility of the need for truthful vision and truthful speech (Bridget Nichols).

And then our Gospel reading takes us to one of the most mysterious and beautiful moments in the NT. As Jesus begins to gather his disciples he finds Philip, who is so impressed by Jesus’ invitation ‘**Follow me**’ - that he goes off

to find Nathanael and says "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:45)

Nathanael's sarcastic response is not promising - '**Can anything good come out of Nazareth?**' But Phillip gives the best possible reply that anyone sharing the mystery of their faith can give; '**Come and see**'... and that invitation to 'come and see' sets a theme of 'seeing' and ‘vision’ which culminates in the amazing exchange between Nathanael and Jesus that follows.

Before Nathanael has uttered a word, Jesus says '**Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.**' - and turns the tables of 'vision' onto Nathanael himself... and in that moment Nathanael suddenly knows that he is completely known by this man he has never met. '**Where did you come to know me?**' he asks, and Jesus' reply is again about vision and seeing: '**I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.**' Jesus indicates that he’s not anxious to be seen as clairvoyant. He wants his followers to see, just as he sees them. He longs to share with them his vision of glory (Jn.1.50; Gen. 28.10-17; Acts 7.56 - B. Nichols).

This is when something amazing happens... Nathanael, who was scoffing at Nazareth a minute before, experiences an Epiphany. Before Jesus, he has a sudden leap of understanding, outpacing all reason or teaching, leaping ahead of all the other disciples to an understanding and certainty that even Peter wouldn’t reach for a while (M. Guite). He declares '**Rabbi, you are the Son of God..the king of Israel!**'

Something whole and complete has been disclosed in a single glance, to see and be seen is enough! This is an example of a sudden 'awakening' - and I'm reminded of the book 'Awakenings,' by the neurologist Oliver Sacks, & the 1990 film with Robert de Niro & Robin Williams of the same title, in which previously catatonic patients are quite literally brought back to life by a new drug, L-Dopa.

But while the epiphanies experienced in that story were sadly only temporary, the effect Jesus has is more profound. He subtly alludes to Nathanael's mention of Israel, promising that this is just the beginning of an even greater epiphany. Nathanael is ['truly an Israelite'](#) and Jesus points to the key epiphany in the life of Israel, when he was still called Jacob, the epiphany in which he saw the ladder connecting heaven and earth: ['Very truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'](#)

Here is one of those thrilling moments when a mysterious image from the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in the New! The ladder was a prophetic image given in a dream to Jacob of what is to come, now it has come true! I am the ladder, Jesus is saying, the true connection, the true gate of Heaven. In this intimate exchange, Nathanael has seen with his waking eyes what his ancestor had seen only veiled in dream and symbol!

*Spoken in the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## **John 1.43-end**

### **Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael**

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

## **1 Samuel 3.1-10**

### **Samuel's Calling and Prophetic Activity**

**3** 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.  
**2** At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his

room; <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>Then the Lord called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>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.' <sup>7</sup>Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>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.  
**10** Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'

## **Psalms 139**

### **The Inescapable God**

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

- <sup>1</sup> O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
- <sup>2</sup> You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.
- <sup>3</sup> You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.
- <sup>4</sup> Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.

<sup>5</sup> You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.  
<sup>12</sup> even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is as bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.

<sup>13</sup> For it was you who formed my inward parts;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
<sup>14</sup> I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
that I know very well.  
<sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
<sup>16</sup> Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.  
In your book were written  
all the days that were formed for me,  
when none of them as yet existed.  
<sup>17</sup> How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!  
<sup>18</sup> I try to count them—they are more than the sand;  
I come to the end—I am still with you.

## **Revelation 5.1-10**

### **The Scroll and the Lamb**

**5** Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals; <sup>2</sup>and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?' <sup>3</sup>And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>4</sup>And I began to weep bitterly because

no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>5</sup>Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.'

**6** Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup>He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. <sup>8</sup>When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup>They sing a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; <sup>10</sup>you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.'

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