



Second Week Ordinary Time 2006

1 Samuel 3:1-21 1 Cor 6:12-20 John 1: 35-42

A popular religious print a few years ago was of the child Samuel at prayer. It was often mistaken for a picture of Jesus as a boy. It depicted a young lad on his knees, hands joined in prayer.

The account of the call of Samuel is a great story to reflect on at the beginning of a new year. Spiritually, the times were dark. The priestly house of Eli was seen to have betrayed its calling. With God however, there is always hope. As the writer put it, “the lamp of God was not yet extinguished.”

Samuel, the young assistant to Eli, was sleeping in a corner of the temple where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. He heard a voice calling to him in the darkness and so he went to his master expecting to run an errand for the old man. Eli tells Samuel that he must have imagined the voice and sends him back to bed.

It happens a second time, Samuel gets up and goes to Eli. When it happens a third time Eli recognises the presence of God in the voice in the darkness. Eli tells Samuel to respond to the call of God by saying, Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.”

This is an example of the perfect prayer of the disciple. We are to be attentive to the voice of God whether it comes in the darkness of uncertainty or in our everyday experiences. As Samuel did not easily recognise God so we have to discern the voice of the Spirit in the midst of clamour of life.

God tells Samuel that changes are coming to the way in which God will be experienced. Samuel grew in wisdom and became recognised as a great prophet. The story ends with the words, “The Lord continued to be present at Shiloh, and he manifested himself in the word of the prophet.” This shift in the focus of spirituality from the Ark to the Word began a new era in the story of the people’s relationship with God.

Placed along side this story is the call of the disciples from the Gospel of John. John the Baptist, with his disciples, watches the approach of Jesus. The old order witnesses to the coming of the new.

The call of the disciples of Jesus is shown as happening over two days. Jesus first two disciples, in this account, belonged to John and begin to follow Jesus when they meet him along the way. John, the evangelist, provides a continuity between the old and the new. One story does not supersede the other but rather is a development.

What made these two, Andrew and his friend, suddenly decide to follow an unknown and leave the safety of the known and reputable? Jesus turned around and asked,

“What are you looking for?” The two may have been questioning their spontaneous action. Jesus question helps them sort out their feelings. They answer with a question. “Where do you make your home?” Jesus replies, “Come and see.”

What are we to make of this encounter? In his Gospel John makes use of the image of home to describe the inclusiveness of the dwelling place of God. “My father’s house comprises many mansions.” There is room for variety in the service of God. There is also room and freedom to use individual gifts.

To set out on the journey of discipleship does not require anything more than a willing heart. There is only one way to discover whether or not you are discipleship material and that is by living it. So the two apprentice disciples spend the day with Jesus.

Andrew gained so much from his encounter with Jesus that he hurried off to find his brother Simon. When we have discovered something or someone who affects us deeply we want to involve our friends.

So Andrew, after a discipleship of a day, brought his brother to Jesus. According to John, to know Jesus is to become involved in the widening circle of discipleship.

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