

The Five Alive with Bishampton and Throckmorton Praying Together on a Sunday

Sunday 17th January 2021 – Epiphany 2

*You may like to light a candle as a visible symbol of Jesus
being present with you.*

The Lord is with us.

Blessed are you, Sovereign God,
our light and our salvation,
to you be glory and praise for ever.
You gave your Christ as a light to the nations,
and through the anointing of the Spirit
you established us as a royal priesthood.
As you call us into your marvellous light,
may our lives bear witness to your truth
and our lips never cease to proclaim your praise.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:
Blessed be God for ever.

That this evening may be holy, good and peaceful,
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Keep a moment of quiet

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your mercy come down upon us to cleanse our hearts
and set us free to sing your praise now and for ever.
Amen.

Canticle:

**Above you the Holy One arises,
and above you God's glory appears.**

- 1 Arise, shine out, for your light has come,
the glory of the Lord is rising upon you.
- 2 Though night still covers the earth,
and darkness the peoples;
- 3 Above you the Holy One arises,
and above you God's glory appears.
- 4 The nations will come to your light,
and kings to your dawning brightness.
- 5 Your gates will lie open continually,
shut neither by day nor by night.
- 6 The sound of violence shall be heard no longer in your land,
or ruin and devastation within your borders.
- 7 You will call your walls, Salvation,
and your gates, Praise.
- 8 No more will the sun give you daylight,
nor moonlight shine upon you;
- 9 But the Lord will be your everlasting light,
your God will be your splendour.
- 10 For you shall be called the city of God,
the dwelling of the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 60.1-3, 11a, 18, 19, 14b

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever.
Amen.**

**Above you the Holy One arises,
and above you God's glory appears.**

Reading: I Samuel 3: 1- 20

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 fulfil 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 for ever, 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 for ever.'

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.

Reading: John 1: 43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.'⁴⁴ 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.’

Reflection

Offered by Sue Hiscocks

Our Gospel reading is set early on in Jesus’s ministry when he begins to call the disciples. Previously John had understood who Jesus was and told Andrew; Andrew finds his brother Simon (Peter) telling him “We have found the Messiah“. In our reading Philip understands who Jesus is and accepts the invitation to “follow me”, rushing off to find Nathanael, telling him “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law Jesus of Nazareth”. But Nathanael isn’t very excited about this news and doesn’t seem too eager to rush off and meet Jesus. In fact, he is downright rude, saying “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” However, Philip doesn’t get angry or downhearted, he simply says “Come and see”. Nathanael accepts the invitation, listens to Jesus and quickly realises who Jesus is, declaring “Rabbi, you are the son of God. You are the King of Israel”. The Good News that the Son of God had come was spreading rapidly.

The old testament reading is set in the early stages of the life of Samuel who had been dedicated to God by his mom, Hannah. Maybe no-one told Samuel this or maybe he was too young to realise, but when God speaks to him he doesn’t understand who it is. Three times God calls, and three times Samuel goes to Eli saying “Here I am; you called me “. At first Eli, a priest, also doesn’t understand who is calling but the third time he realises it is God and reacts immediately; telling Samuel to go and lie down and if he hears the call again to say “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening”. The Lord comes to Samuel for the fourth time, calling “Samuel! Samuel!” and this time Samuel opens his ears, hears God’s call and is ready to listen and respond.

There are some interesting characters and much to unravel in both readings, but I think three things stand out; God's *call*; our *response* and how we *witness* to the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ in a fearful world that is reality today. Throughout Scripture God calls ordinary people, like you and me, in ordinary places to do ordinary and sometimes extraordinary things but I wonder would we recognise Jesus if we saw him? Would we hear and listen if he spoke to us? And if we did, would we respond? What would we do if He walked into church climbed into the pulpit and began reading from the Scriptures? Would we listen or would we look at each other in horror, whispering "Who on earth is that?", hoping the sound technician would mute the microphones? For sure, the story of such an event would spread rapidly.

Are our ears truly open to hear God's call? Are our eyes truly open to recognise Jesus for who He is, the Messiah our Saviour? Or will we need someone to help us; as Eli helped Samuel; Andrew helped Peter and as Philip helped Nathanael? When we recognise Jesus for who He truly is, what then? How do we respond? Would we rush off to tell others about this Good News? Bit of a big ask when we are in our third lockdown, but I also think a big ask anyway, many of us might run the opposite way, saying "no, not me".

Will we be ready to do what God asks of us? It's not to say that will be easy. The first task God gave to a young Samuel was for him to tell Eli destruction would come upon his family; not a nice thing to do but Samuel rose to the challenge. The disciples didn't have it easy, living in fear and persecution because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We may question as Moses did (Exodus 5:22); run the opposite way like Jonah (Jonah 1:3) or be too busy like Martha (Luke 10:38). But to be sure Jesus searches us out and places His call upon us; inviting us to follow, learn, discover and grow in knowledge and faith. As He leads us in this lifetime journey of faith we become instruments of God, used in God's purpose for His world and His people on earth today. But we might ask ourselves

‘how do we witness, how do we share our faith?’, especially now we are once again locked down. We might feel invisible and helpless in mission, witness and in sharing God’s love in our communities. We can find in our shared story, many invisible people witnessing to God’s love; Jethro concerned for Moses (Exodus 18:13-18); Ruth putting love into action (Ruth 1:16-17); Rizpah whose six-month vigil stopped a war (2 Samuel 21:8-10).

Let us take a moment here to think of the people during this pandemic who we do not see or hear about; fighting the battle to save lives; the NHS, front line staff, scientists, medical professionals and whilst we thank God for them all; we may feel even more helpless; thinking ‘what can we do’; we can’t visit people who are struggling, we can’t have a cuppa or a chat. How can we share this Good News, how can we put faith and love into action? Well, I would like to take a moment to think about those we don’t see; in our churches and communities who, since lockdown in March took the love of God out into our communities; caring for any in need of help, shopping, cooking meals, collecting prescriptions, walking dogs; keeping communication going, a phone call, email, twitter, messenger, or a friendly word or two across the road. Let us not forget offering online worship, prayer, study groups; remembering how learning to use Zoom has been quite a challenge, especially when you forget the downstairs bathroom is behind you and your husband is coming out of the shower with no clothes on!

Whatever the answers to the questions I have raised are; be assured that the Good News of Jesus Christ cannot and will not be contained; we are united in our shared story and in our faith and if we let ourselves glimpse the divine power and blessing of God as displayed in Jesus’s ministry, God will reveal Himself to us and we will see God in all his glory. Be assured, unified as God’s people we will rise to the challenges that come our way; and by living out our faith in and through our ordinary lives, the small acts we can do are a visible statement of our faith and we can be

confident that we are witnessing to the Good News of Jesus Christ; we are sharing the joy, hope and love to all we meet, whatever form that takes. Be encouraged at this difficult time; as we celebrate God's faithful love for us and offer ourselves to God's service; Christ our Lord, the Light of the world, is sitting next to us, holding our hands, leading us forward into His light which is His gift to the world. This Good News cannot be contained. And that is 'awesome'.

Keep a moment of quiet to reflect before praying

Prayers

Offered by Celia Willis

As we pray for the Church, the world and our community, let us thank God for his goodness and especially for sending us Jesus Christ the supreme messenger who calls us as disciples to follow Him.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Help us to listen to God's voice calling us from the world where there is trouble and strife. We pray for those who are hungry and homeless, the victims of warfare and disaster and those trying to alleviate need, to be given courage and fortitude. Give to those who are working towards making peace, an inner certainty in their calling and constant patience in their negotiations. May faith, love and hope be used to lessen tension and produce workable outcomes.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Help us to listen to God's voice calling to us in the Church both here and overseas. We pray for the life of the church, our national church leaders, our bishops John and Martin and all the clergy in the diocese. May their wisdom and prayerfulness allow them to face major issues and debates

with honesty and fairness. In this week of Christian Unity, let us pray for the worldwide Church and remember we are all part of the body of Christ which embraces both unity and diversity. Help us all to listen to the joyous voice of worship and the challenging voice of God's word.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Help us to listen to God's voice calling us from within our community, the local schools, industries and rural enterprises struggling with constant change and the effects of the pandemic and recession. We pray for our homes, families and neighbourhood and the relatives and friends to whom we owe so much. May we be actively involved in passing on God's message of love to new disciples and in developing good relationships where we can serve Christ in one another and love as He loves us.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Help us to listen to God's voice calling us through those who are in special need, those who are struggling with sickness and those who are lonely and uncertain about life. We pray for all those looking after them that they may be given strength in their caring task. May they experience God's comfort and healing and be given the joy of His salvation.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Help us to listen to God's voice calling to us as we remember those who have died and those who are experiencing the sadness of bereavement. We pray for those people whose anniversaries fall around now and have no-one to remember them. May we bring before you all those who have kept faith with you during their earthly lives; for their example and encouragement.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Generous God we pray for the grace to be your faithful followers and that our faith will lead us to answer your call to discipleship. In the name

of Jesus Christ who came to serve, to seek and to save.
Amen.

Pause

Collect for Epiphany 2

Almighty God,
in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature
by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

Hymn

Filled with the Spirit's power, with one accord
the infant Church confessed its risen Lord.

O Holy Spirit, in the Church today
no less your power of fellowship display.

Now with the mind of Christ set us on fire,
that unity may be our great desire.
Give joy and peace; give faith to hear your call,
and readiness in each to work for all.

Widen our love, good Spirit, to embrace
in your strong care all those of every race.
Like wind and fire with life among us move,
till we are known as Christ's, and Christians prove.

John Raphael Peacey (1896-1971)

God of glory,
you nourish us with your Word
who is the bread of life:
fill us with your Holy Spirit
that through us the light of your glory
may shine in all the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

