

“Known”

A Reflection by Pastor Beth on Epiphany 2 Lectionary texts:

1 Samuel 3:1-10; Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51
Epiphany Series - Awake! Arise! God is Calling Now.

1 Samuel 3: 1-10

1 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; 3 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. 4 Then the Lord called, “Samuel! Samuel!” and he said, “Here I am!” 5 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. 6 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.” 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. 8 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. 9 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.”

This Old Testament story created a sense of wonder (and a bit of fear) in me when I was a child! I would lie in bed at night picturing young Samuel awakened by a voice calling his name and I would imagine God calling my name. In this story, Samuel does not yet know God. But God knows Samuel.

The word **know** appears again and again in this week's passages pressing upon us how intimately God knows us and inviting us into a deeper knowing of God's presence with us.

"O Lord, you have searched me and known me, you know when I sit down and when I rise up, you discern my thoughts from far away...Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely." prays the Psalmist. *"...For it was you who formed me in my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb."*

"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?" Paul writes to the Corinthians.

"Where did you get to know me?" asks Nathanael, shocked at Jesus' knowledge of him when they meet for the first time in the gospel passage.

With each passage, the lection this week presents us with a God who knows us, seeks us out, calls to us, and inhabits us. What a blessed assurance of being known in our inmost being by the Creator of the Universe! What a comfort that we can rest in the presence of a God who draws near to us in our best and worst moments. And yet, is there also something that we fear about this? Are we resistant at times to the idea of knowing and being known this intimately? Perhaps we have absorbed ideas of God as an intruder and invader surveilling us and keeping track of what we do wrong. Perhaps our childhood images of God make us nervous about God calling our name. Yet, the God we see in these passages; the God who fashioned us in the womb, who knows us inside out, who inhabits our very own bodies, and who recognizes us in the midst of our daily lives; extends a gracious presence that beckons but does not force, that surrounds and indwells but does not confine, and that simply invites us to wake up and to listen, know, and respond to the One who is calling us now.

Most of us walk through our days preoccupied by ideas, concerns, anxieties, and mental pictures. Seldom are we fully present to ourselves,

our immediate experience or one other. It is so easy for us to sleepwalk through our days unaware of God's presence within and all around. And yet God offers us persistent wake up calls to arise and experience the light, love and life that is being poured out for us here and now. Let's not hit the snooze button!

How are you attuning yourself to the call?

What space are you creating to recognize God's presence?

How are you opening yourself to the One who wants to know and be known by you?

One of the ways that I practice attuning myself to God's presence is through contemplative prayer. One of my favourite ways to pray each day is with the Ignatian Prayer of Examen. The Examen is a method of prayerful awareness developed by Ignatius of Loyola in the mid 16th century and has become a bedrock of Ignatian spirituality and Jesuit education.

The Prayer of Examen is a way of reviewing our days and noticing areas of **consolation** - thoughts, emotions and experiences that move us *with and towards* God's presence - and areas of **desolation** - thoughts, emotions and experiences which *distract and take us further away* from God. Areas of consolation energize and inspire us, providing a sense of rootedness and clarity that deepens our connection with the world around us and allow us to look outside beyond ourselves, revealing where God is at work. On the contrary, thoughts, emotions and experiences that are desolate in nature drain us of energy and cloud our judgement, turning us in on ourselves and disconnecting us with our community and the ways God is at work around us.

One thing that I love about the Examen is that it is exceptionally flexible and adaptive. It can be used to review your day, week or month or it can be adapted to hone in on a specific issue or focus. Bringing our consolations and desolations into conversation with God can help us become attuned to the Spirit's movement in our daily lives. In this prayer we invite God to

breathe insight into our thoughts, emotions and actions and to offer us guidance. This prayer has become a profound rhythm in my life, and perhaps it may be a gift to you too.

I invite you to join me in the Prayer of Examen today. We will begin by praying portions of Psalm 139 from "Psalms for Praying" by Nan C. Merrill and then we will move through a 5-part Prayer of Examen that I have adapted for us from one I was taught by one of my dear mentors Cathy Hardy. Take a moment to find a comfortable position. Gently deepen your breath. Like a rock settling on the bottom of a lake after it's thrown in, let yourself settle. I encourage you to pray the psalm aloud.

Psalm 139

O my Beloved, You have searched me
and known me!

You know when I sit down and
when I rise up;

You discern my innermost thoughts.

You find me on the journey and
guide my steps;

You know my strengths and
my weaknesses.

Even before words rise up in prayer,

Lo, You have already heard
my heart call.

You encompass me with love where'er
I go,

and your strength is my shield.

Such sensitivity is too wonderful
for me;

it is high; boundless gratitude
is my soul's response.

For You formed my inward being,

You knit me together in my

mother's womb.
I praise You, for You are to be
reverenced and adored.
Your mysteries fill me with wonder!
More than I know myself do You know me;
my essence was not hidden from You,
When I was being formed in secret,
Intricately fashioned from the
elements of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance;
in your records were written
every one of them,
The days that were numbered for me,
When as yet there was none of them.
How precious to me are your creations,
O Blessed One!
How vast is the sum of them!
Who could count your innumerable
gifts and blessings?
At all times, You are with me.

Prayer of Examen

Review the day:

Beginning at the start of this day or yesterday - review the events of the day with gratitude for the gift of life. Let your mind scan over the big and small things that happened. Pay attention to the thoughts and emotions that arise.

Consolation:

Express your heart by putting into words all that brought you life this day. What are you thankful for? Where did you notice yourself being energized? Where did you taste joy? What was deeply meaningful? Where did your heart sing?

Desolation:

Fully express your fears, disappointments, anxieties and anything that pulled you away from your centre, the place of being rooted and grounded. Allow yourself to be fully honest with your confusion, anger, angst or pain.

Words of Life:

Invite God to speak into your consolation and desolation. Pray the words of Samuel, "*Speak, for your servant is listening.*" Become silent and open your heart to receive wisdom, guidance, a call to action - words of life.

Gratitude and Grace:

As you end this time of prayer, offer gratitude for any awarenesses, insights or invitations received. Give thanks for the ways that God comes to us in the midst of our consolation and desolation. Ask for grace for the coming day and for a growing awareness of God's presence as you live and move and have your being.

Bless you as you enter this new week. May you go in peace remembering you are known and loved by God. No matter where you are or what you experience - God's love encircles you - before and behind, above and below, on your left and on your right. From the farthest ocean to the highest mountain; from the heights of joy to the depths of despair - wherever you find yourself, God is there!