



INTRODUCTIONS

The First Reading : 1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)

Samuel has dreams and Eli the priest tells him how to respond to them. God is speaking to the boy

The Psalm: Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

The writer of the Psalm acknowledges that God knows everything about him - what he is thinking, what he is going to say.

The Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:5-12

The God who can shine out of darkness can speak through us even with our inadequacies.

The Gospel Reading: Mark 2:23-3:6

Jesus is challenged in the wheat field and in the synagogue by those who feel they are the custodians of the word of God. Jesus teaches and heals to challenge their mindset.

[View readings](#)

Collect One

O God,
the strength of all them that put their trust in thee;

Mercifully accept our prayers;
and because through the weakness of our mortal nature
we can do no good thing without thee, grant us the help of thy
grace,
that in keeping of thy commandments
we may please thee both in will and deed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

God,
the strength of all those who put their trust in you:
Mercifully accept our prayers
and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature
we can do no good thing without you, grant us the help of your
grace,
that in the keeping of your commandments
we may please you, both in will and deed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

We enter God's house on the appointed day, leaving behind
uninformed legalism and seeking the true purpose of our worship.
We appeal, "O compassionate Lord,"
and respond , "Help us."

For our archbishops and bishops, that they may wisely discern
what is truly redemptive for the Church of Ireland.
O compassionate Lord.
Help us.

For our diocesan bishop _____ that he may prosper in his
pastoral duties and find strength for his work. O compassionate
Lord.
Help us.

For all members of the Church of Ireland , that
they may stand ready to serve and work for the up-building of
Christ's church. O compassionate Lord.
Help us.

For the body of saints in the Anglican Communion, at home and abroad, that it may celebrate anew, oneness and holiness in Christ Jesus and go forward with the gospel. O compassionate Lord.

Help us.

For communities in city or country, that your Holy Spirit may assist all leaders in finding solutions to the many problems which prevail across our land. O compassionate Lord.

Help us.

Holy Spirit, pardon and cleanse us to make us truly free, so that your praise may once again be upon our lips and in our lives. O compassionate Lord. Help us. Come among us as comforter, enlightener and healer to the honour of your name, O God.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Presider or deacon

As brothers and sisters of Christ, let us do the will of God by interceding in a spirit of faith for the needs of all.

Deacon or other leader

For this holy gathering and for the people of God in every place. Lord, have mercy.

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families. Lord, have mercy.

For all that is good and bountiful for the world. Lord, have mercy.

For all those in danger and need, the sick and the suffering, the hungry and the oppressed, travelers and prisoners. Lord, have mercy.

For the dying and the dead.
Lord, have mercy.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.
Lord, have mercy.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with Saint _____(parish name)
and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the
living God through Christ.
To you, O Lord.

Presider

God, who raised your Son from the dead, hear the prayers we offer
this day, renew the
world to its true nature, and bring us into your presence; through
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

Eternal Father,
we thank you for nourishing us
with these heavenly gifts.
May our communion strengthen us in faith,
build us up in hope,
and make us grow in love;
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

Your hand is upon your people, O God,
to guide and protect them through the ages.
Keep in your service
those you have called and anointed,
that the powers of this world may not overwhelm us,
but that, secure in your love,
we may carry out your will
in the face of all adversity. Amen.

O God our ruler and shepherd,
you anointed Jesus
as the king and servant of your people.
Make us attentive to your word,
that we may accept your reign over us
and serve you alone. Amen.

Intercessory

Friends in Christ,
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers
as dear to us as our own needs.
Loving our neighbors as ourselves,
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions
on behalf of the church and the world.
Prayers of the People, concluding with:
Hear our prayers, God of power,
and through the ministry of your Son
free us from the grip of the tomb,
that we may desire you as the fullness of life
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,
and guided them in the way of your love,
so listen now to those who call upon you.
Prayers of the People, concluding with:
Move us to praise your gracious will,
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens
and healed our spirits.
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,
those seeking healing,
those in need within the church and the world.
Prayers of the People, concluding with:
Hear our prayers
that we may love you with our whole being
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbors. Amen.

Creator God,
you call us to love and serve you
with body, mind, and spirit
through loving your creation
and our sisters and brothers.
Open our hearts in compassion
and receive these petitions
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.
Prayers of the People, concluding with:
Holy One,
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards
of the fragile bounty of this earth
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.
We offer these prayers of love
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbors,
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.
Prayers of the People, concluding with:
Loving God,
open our ears to hear your word
and draw us closer to you,
that the whole world may be one with you
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,
you who hear the cries of those in need,
receive these petitions of your people
that all who are troubled
may know peace, comfort, and courage.
Prayers of the People, concluding with:
Life-giving God,
heal our lives,
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds
and offer you thanks from generation to generation
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,
hear our prayers
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings
with your unending compassion.

Prayers of the People, concluding with:

Redeeming Sustainer,
visit your people
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,
that we may hurry to make you welcome
not only in our concern for others,
but by serving them
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

Holy God,
you search us out and know us better
than we know ourselves.
As Samuel looked to Eli
for help to discern your voice,
and as the disciples looked to Jesus
for your wisdom on the Sabbath,
so raise up in our day faithful servants
who will speak your word to us
with clarity and grace,
with justice and true compassion.
We pray through Christ, the Word made flesh. Amen.

Lord of the Sabbath, lawgiver and outlaw,
you lift the burdens from our shoulders.
You entrust your treasure to our clay.
Sabbath in us a rest --
joyful as tambourines,
nourishing as bread,
and available to all people, rich and poor --
so that withered bodies and spirits can be restored. Amen

SERMON

“What?”

It's what we often say when we hear or see or feel something that shocks us, or stuns us, or feels unbelievable, or out of place.

“What?” we say.

Then we may say or think, “Did I hear that right?” Or “Am I seeing what I think I'm seeing?” Or “This doesn't feel right.”

“What?”

It's perhaps one of the first things we will say when we hear news that means we're about to enter a period of transition. It's what the pastor or deacon who gets that call from the district superintendent thinks when he or she sees the number on the screen, or hears the voice at the other end of the call. It's what the staff-parish chair thinks when the district superintendent notifies her about the date and time for the take-in. It's what a lot of people may think when news gets out that their pastor or deacon won't be there after June or maybe sooner.

“What?”

It's what loyal employees think when word comes down that their entire division is shutting down and their jobs are gone. It's what families of members of the military, armed forces, or police, or firefighters think when people dressed in uniform appear at their door with news to share. It's what parents think when they get a call or email from their child's college saying their child is failing or in trouble and it's time to take them home. It's what we think when something doesn't feel right—there's pain, or memory loss, or a sudden lack of coordination—so we go to the doctor for tests. And it may be what we think when the test results are in and the diagnosis comes.

“What?”

Or, perhaps less dramatically, it's what we say when we're asleep, and someone awakens us unexpectedly.

“What?”

The Hebrew text of our reading this morning does not say Eli said “What?” when Samuel wakened him twice one night, claiming Eli had called him and he was there to do Eli’s bidding.

But I don’t think it’s a stretch to imagine that’s what he may have been thinking.

“What? No, no, I didn’t call you. Go back to bed.”

And the second time:

“What? Again? No, I told you, I didn’t call you. Go back to bed!”

But the third:

“Oh. I see. Go back to bed. And if he calls you again, say, “Speak, O Lord our God, your servant is listening.”

Samuel spoke as Eli instructed. And it was news from the Lord that would likely make Samuel say, “What?” Eli’s sons had disdained the priesthood, treating it as their privilege to advantage themselves rather than fulfill God’s calling to serve among the people. Eli had failed to rein them in, so his household was done for, and no amount of sacrifices now could repair or atone for the damage that had been done. We don’t know what Samuel said, just that he then lay there in his bed all night long, pondering it, wondering what to do about it.

What?

Often, when this story is told, I find preachers focus on the failings of Eli and the faithfulness of Samuel. The story, as written, certainly supports that kind of focus.

But today, I’d like us to focus on the faithfulness and wisdom of the failed priest. It is Eli, in this story, who ultimately shows us how to handle ourselves in the face of things that make us say, “What?”

Note in verse 5 that Samuel heard the voice of the Lord and assumed it was Eli’s voice. Let that sink in. Though we learn in verse 7 that Samuel had never before heard the word of the Lord come to him, the moment he did, he was sure the voice was of the priest who had taken him in and raised him, the priest whom he accompanied and served in his ministrations to the Lord through

sacrifice, prayer, and other forms of ritual. What does this say about how those we raise will hear God's voice?

And Eli was a failed priest, failed in that he had not successfully led his sons to take up his work after him. But still, when the voice of the Lord came to Samuel, Samuel heard Eli. Eli's sons wouldn't listen to their father, much less God. Samuel did. Indeed, Samuel heard God's voice as Eli's voice.

We may think Eli was a bit slow about recognizing the voice Samuel was hearing as being the voice of the Lord. But let us not miss that he did notice this. And he did more than notice. He taught Samuel how to respond.

And the next morning, it was Eli who initiated the follow up conversation about what happened. It was Eli who insisted Samuel hold back nothing of what the Lord had told him. And though what Samuel told him, no doubt with some trepidation, was certainly enough to make anyone say, "What?," Eli's response showed the way forward. "It is the Lord. Let him do what pleases him" (vs. 18, NRSV).

We may find ourselves facing all sorts of transitions in our lives just now— in our families, in our work, in our schooling, in our congregation, in our denomination, in our community, in our nation, and in our world. I can say there hasn't been a day go by recently when I haven't heard some news that made me say, "What?"

But Eli shows us the way to deal with each "What?" It's to keep listening. It's to let the "What?" keep coming until we understand where it's coming from, even if we don't yet know what it all means. It's to realize the Lord may be speaking to us or to someone else in the midst of our "What?" And if it's not to us, directly, it's to encourage those to whom the Lord is speaking to share what they heard, and not be afraid to share it. And then, it's to walk into what the Lord is saying, or as we talked about it last week, where the Spirit is leading us as God's children, trusting, "It is the Lord."

Somewhere, in every "What?," or in the places where each "What?" leads, we are hearing from God. The "What?" indicates our initial shock, or fear, or disbelief, or awe in the face of

something we sense is changing, transitioning. The “What?” is a gift that catches our attention and causes us, if we pay attention, to seek to learn more, to get greater clarity, even if we fear we won’t like what greater clarity will bring. The “What?” pursued as Eli pursued it, may be the Spirit’s groan from within us, too deep for words, that leads us to cry out “Abba! Father!” And then, then, we can choose, like Eli, to listen, and keep listening some more.

And when we do, we still may not understand, much less like, the “Why?” behind the “What?”, much less what is going to come next.

But we’ll be able to do it, knowing our Lord is in it, and we are in the Lord. Amen.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

- "[Great, Good Work,](#)" Stephen B. Chapman, Duke Divinity School, 2009.

CHILDREN

Worshiping with Children Proper 5B, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/year-b-proper-5-10th-sunday-in-ordinary.html>

Sermon of the Week

Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com.
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

