

January 14, 2018

1 Sm 3:3b-10,19; 1 Cor 6:13c-15a,17-20; Jn 1:35-42

I really like the story that we heard in the first reading. There is this young boy Samuel. He is dedicated to the temple and he lives there. One night in the temple, near the Ark of the covenant where the physical presence of God is (like in our Tabernacle), he is asleep. The voice of God calls to him and wakes him up in the middle of the night. We are told that he *was not yet familiar with the Lord*, so he did not recognize God's voice. He runs to the old priest Eli to see what he wants, the old man was more patient with him than one might expect at this hour, yet he also was half-asleep and didn't get what was going on. He just calmly sends the boy back to bed. This happens three times and Samuel always quickly responds (we all should have such attentive children who come whenever they are called! ... Don't laugh too hard parents: the kids are saying "yeah, and we should have parents as patient as Eli!). Eli finally realizes what is going on, he tells Samuel what to say if he is called again. By the boy's behavior we know that when he speaks these words he will truly mean them: "*Speak, your servant is listening.*" What a marvelous attitude of openness - Jesus will one day commend this attuned and say that adults should have more of this childlike willingness to be open and listen.

Children can sometimes be difficult, but they also know somewhere that they aren't in control and they need to rely on others - they are often in a servant role when compared to those in charge. We are told by our culture that we must always be in charge of our destiny, that we can let no one tell us what to do. We sometimes can believe that we can make of the world and our lives whatever we want them to be. This attitude bumps into an important reality: We are not as in control as we would like to believe we are. It's an illusion that we have been sold that we can control everything in our lives. We are always going to potentially be at the service of someone or something, somewhere - even the most high powered business person is to some degree serving their customers, their shareholders, their family, or the hurricane that disrupts shipments. In the second reading St. Paul tells us of the result of our baptism and our union with the sacrifice of Christ: *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit? ... you have been purchased at a price.* Maybe it is ok to be the servant of at least one individual ... God.

Today's readings focus on a call and a response. A call from the God who really is master of all, and the response of those who serve God in love. A call from God either personally or through another,

and a response to that call. In the first reading Samuel is being called by God directly by a mysterious voice - in the Gospel, John is pointing out who Jesus is and issuing an indirect call to follow Jesus. In the story of Samuel we can see an individual who hears this call and responds willingly. I mean look at Samuel. He hear the voice in the middle of the night - he's just a kid - it's dark he doesn't just try to control what is going on by pretending he can't hear (as one of us might have done when we were kids) When Eli finally gets what is going on and sends young Samuel to have a conversation with the mysterious disembodied voice that he is not familiar with - he does it. Such trust, such love - he's not looking for anything - just to be of service, just to hear God's voice.

In the Gospel Jesus asks those that come to join him a question: *What are you looking for?* The response from the disciples is not a list of things that they want, or problems for him to fix. They answer his question with another question: *Where are you staying?* They are so eager to be with Jesus that they don't even answer his question. They know that if they just stay with Him, if they walk with Him, if they serve Him, then they will be made complete and will have all they need. *Where are you staying* so that we can hear you personally speaking to us and listen to you? Like Samuel their attitude is *Speak Lord your servant is listening!* Tell us what we need to do, let us follow you as a different kind of servant - we want more than just doing what you teach, we want to live in your house with you, to know you intimately, to serve you out of respect and love. Jesus' response to them and their attitude of openness is an invitation and a promise: *Come, and you will see.*

Will you make the decision to follow Jesus more closely and build a personal relationship with him? If you do you will see things that you won't believe (I can tell you this from personal experience). You'll see that you don't have to be in charge all the time, because God will do things better than you could have - you'll see why it is so much more freeing to be the servant of God rather than trying to give God advice, or present a list of what you are looking for. *Come*, [to Jesus with the attitude of Samuel, with the attitude of the disciples in the Gospel] *and you will see.* Answer this invitation to "Come and See" with the response we made to the psalm: *Here I am Lord, I come to do your will.* Open your mind and listen to the presence of God within your temple as you pray, and have the attitude of the young child Samuel: *Speak Lord, your servant is listening* - you just might be surprised at what you hear. Oh, and if you don't hear anything at first don't be discouraged, it took Samuel a while, and he had to get pointers from Eli (probably for years) before he learned to recognize God's voice. God is calling out to us sometimes in our hearts and minds, sometimes because someone has pointed out the way to us - can we at least try and learn to listen to God's guidance, and then respond in love?