

Sermon - 01-14-24
Prophet's Call
Ps 139; 1 Sam 3:1-20;
1 Cor 6:12-20; Jn 1:43-51

You have heard of the heavenly books. Scripture speaks of this: Daniel 7:10

“A river of fire was flowing. And, coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened.”

Revelation 20:12

“And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds”

We in our time know that thousands of books can be loaded onto a device the size of a cell phone, or even smaller, so why should the heavenly books be big dusty volumes that weigh fifty pounds each? The psalm for today speaks of God's presence and the evidence of God's working in our lives. God was aware of you even as you were being “knit together” in your mother's womb. We tremble to hear this, don't we? But we also rejoice that we, small as we are compared to all that is, are important to God. Why else would Scripture speak of a final reckoning? Why else would He have sent Jesus Christ into our suffering and lonely world?

What is going on when Jesus looks at you and me? He sees much more than a mere mortal sees when we are in view. When we women visit the radiologist for a mammogram, we undergo what is called tomosynthesis. The camera produces several images in sequence taken from many angles along the breast. Then, the radiologist produces a 3-D image that is complete. Each image is like a page. When they are assembled, there is much more information visible than if one image were produced. There is looking, and then there is **looking**. There is seeing, and then there is **seeing**. As when you swab the inside of your cheek and send your DNA for analysis, the electron microscope sees deeply into the cells and reveals basic genetic codes – the stuff that makes your eyes brown or blue, your hair black or red or brown.

We cannot truly know the mechanics of Christ's looking and seeing. But our Scriptures illuminate the outcomes of God seeing you – seeing me. Never mind, God's power to shape events in the cosmos and even in our small world here in the Solar System. What we have before us today are two pictures of how much God loves Samuel and Nathanael. Remember the childhood game, “I Love You – I Love You More”? Perhaps you still play that game with your loved ones. Well, God does love you more. He can read you like a book – and He still loves you more. He loves you just as you are – and He's not about to settle for less than His Spirit working in, through and among all His people. God speaks to the individual human heart. He especially speaks through the thoughts and actions of God's people – the body of Christ.

We visit the Prophet Samuel today in the OT Scripture. He is still a boy. The Bible says the old priest, Eli, taught the young man to answer the Lord when He calls by saying, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” (v 9) So, that is what Samuel said the next time God spoke to him. It was that very night that he was told of the judgment that was to come upon Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Samuel is becoming the prophet of the Lord in all Israel. God loved Samuel and made him His instrument to establish the monarchy of the nation. God can read His servants like a book. As David wrote in the psalm: “*Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.*”

Many generations later, when Jesus began His public ministry, He called His disciples to go with Him. The day He met Nathanael, He knew that this man was true and genuine. He never tried to deceive anyone into believing that he was

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more than he actually was. Jesus saw into Nathanael's heart and spirit, that the Holy Spirit gave him insight into the things of God, even earlier that day. Jesus could see Nathanael in his time of prayer, under the fig tree. Nathanael was deeply impressed at Jesus' insight. Jesus let him know that there were many things that would amaze him much more than that. The Lord could read Nathanael's past and his future in Christ's kingdom.

Paul reminds the Corinthians, who had permitted some very worldly values and worldly behavior into their fellowship, that "anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him." (1 Cor 6:17) And furthermore, Paul claims this is real change. Your and my spirit – our souls – are bound up in Jesus when we receive His Holy Spirit. Paul teaches that this is a marriage relationship. So intimate is the union of God and His beloved, that we are essentially changed. We are transformed into the temple of that very Holy Spirit.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul taught that: "In Him (that is Christ), you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise..." (Eph 1:13)

"you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us (said Paul), written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." (2 Cor 3:3)

Your story and my story are joined with Jesus' story. He reads you and me – and then we are read by all whose lives touch ours. Jesus is seen and known in what we say and do. As we wait upon God in prayer, let us say silently to our dear Lord Jesus, "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears." Amen.