

# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

## A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Second Sunday after the Epiphany, January 17, 2021

### Do You Hear What I Hear?

#### 1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)

3:1 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.

3:2 At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room;

3:3 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.

3:4 Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!"

3:5 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.

3:6 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."

3:7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

3:8 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.

3:9 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.

3:10 Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

3:11 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.

3:12 On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end.

3:13 For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them.

3:14 Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

3:15 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.

3:16 But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am."

3:17 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."

3:18 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."

3:19 As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

3:20 And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD.

This passage tells of a time when the word of God and divinely-inspired visions were rare. It is in this context that a young boy, Samuel, lives with and studies under the elderly priest, Eli. God had promised Samuel to Hannah; and, she had promised Samuel to God. The young boy hears his name called several times; and, each time he thinks that it is Eli. Eli discerns that the voice calling Samuel is indeed the voice of God.

We live in a time when many make truth claims in the name of truth, justice, even God. We have witnessed the recent plethora of mis and disinformation campaigns. Based on what channel, station, newspaper, or social media platform you engage, you may hear very distinct voices and be shaped to believe vastly different realities. Do you hear what I hear? What truth or reality do you perceive?

The World Health Organization reports that there are 466 million people in the world with disabling hearing loss. For these, hearing and perceiving are not primarily by the physical ear. The same can be said of the faithful who listen for the voice of God. Hearing must occur with ear, heart, and whole being. Discerning the voice of God happens best in community. Young Samuel heard but could not fully understand without the wisdom and experience of Eli the elder, whose vision had grown dim but perception was strong. The future judgment Eli could not see Samuel was able to share at Eli's urging.

Our world is suffering. There is deep division, sickness, degradation, and death. What do you see? What do you hear? To what is the voice of God calling the faithful? To what is God calling you?

On Monday, many will celebrate the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. King heard the voice of God, perhaps most clearly on the night of January 27, 1956. In his memoir, *Stride Toward Freedom*, King tells of receiving a threatening phone call late in the evening, prompting a spiritual revelation that fills him with strength to carry on in spite of persecution. The voice on the phone threatened his life and the lives of his family; but, after the call, the voice of God called him to stand for freedom, justice, and truth in spite and in the face of fear, violence, and the threat of death.

In the Northern Hemisphere, January 18-25 for many Christians is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, a time for Christians from many different churches to gather to pray and worship together, praying for unity among them and being a witness of that unity in a broken and divided world. In these gatherings for unity, in these commemorations of King's legacy of truth and justice, may we hear the voice of God over all the competing and conflicting voices of the world. May we hear God's call and answer, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

**TALK:** Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Reflecting on the scripture, what is the voice of God saying to you?

**PRAY:**

God of love, through Christ you said to us: "You did not choose me but I chose you". You seek us, you invite us to receive your friendship and abide in it. Teach us to respond more deeply to this invitation, and grow in a life that is ever more complete. God of life, you call us to be praise in the midst of the world and to welcome one another as a gift of your grace. May your loving gaze, which rests upon each person, open us to receive each other just as we are. AMEN.

Adapted from the Resources for the 2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/ENG%202021%20Booklet.pdf>

En español: <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/WPCU2021-es.pdf>

Em português: <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/2021%20SPUC%20PT%20Livret.pdf>

En français: <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/2021%20Livret%20SPUC%20FRA%20def.pdf>

**ACT:**

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, what can you do to make yourself more available to be a "listening ear" for someone who may need help in making sense of what they are hearing or experiencing? In this Season after the Epiphany, do what you can to show that we all belong together; help others and yourself by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, and wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19— See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

**Song:**

I Can Hear My Savior Calling (Where He Leads Me)  
AMEC Hymnal, #235

1. I can hear my Sav-ior call-ing,  
I can hear my Sav-ior call-ing,  
I can hear my Sav-ior call-ing,  
"Take thy cross and fol-low, fol-low Me."

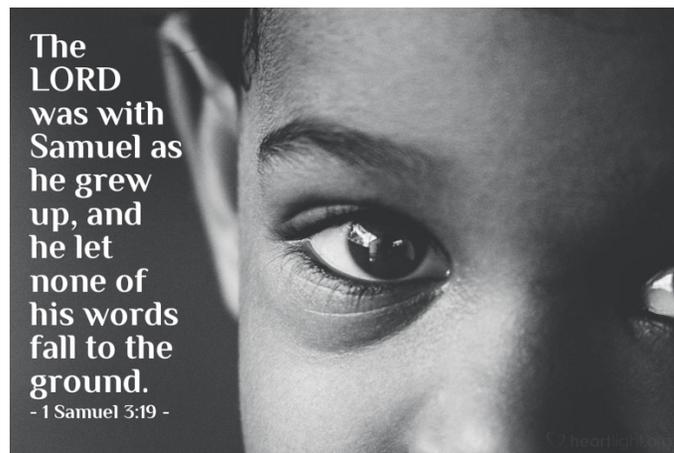
*Refrain: Where He leads me I will fol-low,  
Where He leads me I will fol-low,  
Where He leads me I will fol-low,  
I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.*

2. I'll go with Him through the gar-den,  
I'll go with Him through the gar-den,  
I'll go with Him through the gar-den,  
I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.
3. I'll go with Him through the judg-ment,  
I'll go with Him through the judg-ment,  
I'll go with Him through the judg-ment,  
I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.
4. He will give me grace and glo-ry,  
He will give me grace and glo-ry,  
He will give me grace and glo-ry,  
And go with me, with me all the way.

Alternative Song: One of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's favorite hymns: *Precious Lord, Take My Hand* performed by Mahalia Jackson: <https://youtu.be/FMSWJxNlaww>

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols (like a bowl of water to remind you of the waters of baptism) or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



*The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.*