

In the first reading today, we heard the story of how young Samuel, with the help of his mentor, Eli, the High priest, first learned to recognize the voice of God in his life. As he continued to listen to God in the years that followed, young Samuel grew to become a great prophet and priest himself, the last of the great leaders called "Judges" in the Bible in an important era of God's plan to prepare Israel and the world for the Messiah who would one day come.

In the last reading from the gospel of John, we heard of how two young fishermen, John and Andrew, first came to recognize Jesus. As devoted Jews of good will, they had been coming regularly to listen to John the Baptist speak of God. They had come to believe in John the Baptist as an authority on things of God. So, when John the Baptist pointed out Jesus and told them, "Behold, the Lamb of God", they went to Jesus.

Jesus asked them, "What do you seek?" And then He invited them to "Come and See". That was their invitation to have a relationship with the living God. It is an invitation to life. Not life as you have always known it, -but the best kind of life - the way God originally intended it.

John and Andrew followed Jesus - and that decision that changed their lives. They spent time getting to know him and came to believe in Him as the Promised Messiah.

Then they, in turn, went and brought their two brothers, James and Simon (who would later be renamed Peter) to meet Jesus, as well. As you know, these four men all became apostles - all became heroic and key witnesses of Christ - and all became foundation stones of the Church Jesus established. And they all became 4 more examples (like Eli and Samuel) of people who looked for God, found Him, said "yes" to Him - and fulfilled their places in His plan of salvation.

It seems to me, the question that rises out of these readings for us today is...

**“What are WE looking for...really?”**

At one level, one could say that all of us here, who have come to church this weekend, are looking for God. But, it isn't really that easy. Because, even though God is easy to find - because, in fact, He is everywhere - the practical truth is that He is also hard to see, even in church. That's not because He isn't here. He most assuredly IS here in this sacred space and in the Holy sacrament - in a way more special than He is present everywhere else. But, the fact remains that we all still struggle, in our human limitations, to perceive His Presence.

Many of you, I know, are here mainly because someone makes you come (perhaps your parents - or your wife). Or you may come because it is your personal habit to be in church on Sunday - it's part of what you do. That is good. But, just being here is not the same thing as being open to God and open to what God wants to do for us.

Too often, our mind wanders. Our body is here but our heart is somewhere else. We don't listen or really pay attention. The result is we experience a clouded spiritual vision. God comes and He visits us. But we leave, by and large, without seeing Him nor being changed by Him.

We also struggle with all the competing thoughts and desires of our lives. We have problems. We have plans. We are distracted by career success. We are dazzled by glitz and gold. We are flattered by titles. We are subdued by money. We work for compliments and attention. We are made sluggish with the common routine of life. And, we are carried away by lesser loves.

All these type things, whether they are sinful desires or merely lesser good things, are notions that should remain exterior to ourselves. What I mean by that is that these are things we do in our lives but should not be what we live for - because they cannot satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts. When we allow them in to occupy our souls, they come to rule us and to take up space in our hearts that was made to be nourished by much more divine and holy goods.

The result is, we can become spiritually dull - with a diminished ability to see the good around us - both in church and in our every day lives. We lose the joyful response that should come when we come across true kindness or a kind face. The world of the spirit and light and quality and silent wonder seems miles away from us - and the spiritual richness that God offers us is replaced with a void. God's presence seems hidden to us. We miss God in the people around us - and even miss Him in the Eucharist.

The challenge today is for us to call ourselves back to clear spiritual vision. If you haven't seen or felt God's presence in a while and you want that - you need that - then I have great news for you. God is truly here. He is in this place. He is in this assembly of believers. He is in the person sitting next to you. He is in the Scriptures we proclaim. And, he is in the Eucharist.

Jesus is asking you and me this morning, "What do you seek?" He is saying to us, "Come and See me for you." This is an invitation to REAL life and to REAL love. They kind we were created for.

The question is - What will our response be?

Will we have no response at all?

Will we say, "Thanks - but no thanks"?

Will we say, "Maybe later"?

Will we let our minds wander off to other places this morning and missed the call again?

Or - will we respond today in the affirmative to as God speaks to our hearts with His patient and powerful quiet whisper? Eli's advice to young Samuel is also good advice to us. When we hear God speaking to us we should say, "Speak to me, Lord. I'm listening".

John and Andrew did just that. They listened and obeyed. They went with Jesus. What they saw and heard so captivated them that they gave up everything to follow him. And they rarely left His side for the rest of the days that he walked the earth.

That's a model we should imitate. As Christians, we need to receive God's love and mercies anew - and make a decision to choose life in Christ every day.

In a few moments, after the prayer of consecration, Fr. Stanton will raise the host and the cup- a former piece of Bread that has become the very Body of Jesus Christ and wine which has become His Blood- and he will call our attention to Jesus in the Eucharist with the very same words that John the Baptist used to call the young disciples' attention to Jesus. He will say "THIS IS THE LAMB OF GOD".

When we hear those words today, let us hear Jesus as us "What do you seek?" and see Him with fresh eyes. Let's hear Him say "Come and see" -and respond to Him with a fresh and lively faith. And then, let us come forward and receive Him.

Then, like Samuel and John and Andrew, let's follow Him wherever He leads us.