

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Year B

I Samuel 3:1-2
I Corinthians 6:11b-20

Psalm 63:1-8
St. John 1:43-51

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

It is so easy to get things wrong in the world. All around us we seem to see only anger and despair, wars, fighting, starvation, famine, and hatred. It would certainly seem that the word of the Lord is rare these days just as the word was rare in Eli's days.

Eli is an old man. He probably needs help getting around. Perhaps he cannot even get out of bed on his own these days. And so when Samuel hears his name being called, he makes a logical conclusion. It must be Eli. He must need assistance.

As so often happens, when we are faced with the supernatural it is only normal to attribute a human explanation for it. And so Samuel is sure it is Eli calling him. He is sure it must be Eli's voice, he is the only one around who would call him. He never imagines it could be God.

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It is the same now as it was in Samuel's times. Theologians and everyday Christians like you and me struggle to understand God in human terms. We all deal with it in different ways. Some ignore God. Some see God everywhere and in everything. Some must make every thing have a rational human explanation.

Because of this, some must deny the Virgin Birth. Actually there never was a Virgin Birth, it was a Virgin Conception. But that is a whole other story. Some must deny all the miracles in the Bible. Does that make them no longer Christian? I don't think so. While many of us accept the creeds as the full explanation of the mystery of God and of God's revelation to us, others do not. I don't think that God or the Bible are quite so strict though as to demand acceptance of the Creeds.

The Bible repeatedly says that we must only have faith in Christ. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." Nothing about the Virginal Conception. Nothing about the Trinity. Nothing about God the Father or the

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Holy Spirit. Nothing about following the Ten Commandments or the Golden Rule. Nothing about the Creeds.

I do believe in all these things. I believe in a God who can and still does today perform miracles. BUT, my beliefs are not the foundation of Christianity (no matter how much I may think they are!) At its most basic level, being a Christian really requires very little.

And it is just plain wrong for me or anyone else for that matter, to require adherence to my own personal beliefs to make a person a Christian.

L. William Countryman in a commentary entitled "When religion goes bad" observed: "Christians have been as eager as anybody else to place the cultivation of devout perfection at the heart of our religious life. I wonder if this is not exactly what lies at the root of all fundamentalisms. The search for this sort of flawless perfection breeds hardness; it breeds lack of hospitality; it breeds anger and a sense of entitlement..." (The Witness, Jan/Feb 2003, p. 10)

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This summer you may very well hear much about who is faithful and who is not in the Episcopal Church. At General Convention several contentious issues will arise, none of them really amounting to anything with regard to what makes a person a Christian. Yet both sides will question the faith of the other. Both will claim that theirs is the Christian position. Both are wrong when they do that! Faith is between you and God.

There is nothing wrong about disagreeing on many issues. Good and faithful Christians have disagreed over the past centuries and good and faithful Christians will continue to disagree until Jesus comes again.

But to accuse each other of heresy and or treachery is wrong. It is most unchristian.

So let us not be saddened by the inevitable. Let us trust in God. And let us get about doing God's business in Seward. When we hear the call of God let us only say

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"Speak Lord, for your servant hears." Let us not fight and
bicker. And most importantly let us not judge one another.