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**Second Sunday of Epiphany**

**By Joy Dipple**

**1 Samuel 3:1-10**

**John 1:43-51**

I suspect that whenever we read or hear passages of scripture like these for today, our first response is usually on the lines of: "Yes Lord, I'm here. What do you want me to do? What is my ministry? Let's jump to it!" But maybe we need to step back a bit first.

Jesus was an ultra-busy person, but He never seemed to be in a hurry and had plenty of time for people. He never had a lie in though, but was eager to get up early and sit in His Father's presence BEFORE He did anything.

Samuel had to learn to distinguish God's voice. He needed to be in relationship with Him before he could relay God's word to others.

Then what about Nathaniel? He may have been studying Jewish scriptures under the shade of the fig tree when Jesus saw him. Who was he? On googling and looking at the commentaries I discovered that he was likely to have been the one who was better known as Bartholomew, one of Jesus' 12 disciples. It is only in John's Gospel that we know him as Nathaniel. He came from Cana, a rival village to Nazareth.

Nathaniel seemed to quickly discern that Jesus had a divine quality about Him, the one who could truly connect heaven with earth, like the connecting ladder of Jacob's dream of the angels ascending and descending.

We are all disciples too. What does Jesus first say to us? Like His directive to Philip His word is: "Follow me." He doesn't say: "Go and deliver Mrs. So and So's groceries first; then follow me." He simply says: "Follow me."

In my mind's eye I imagine Jesus just wanting our presence first and foremost. I picture Him saying:

"Come and sit with me, my brother, my sister; just rest awhile with me. Oh, and don't bring that 'to do' list yet that you want me to pass on to my Father. We'll sort that out later – together; just rest awhile with me. I enjoy your company and have all the time in the world for you. Let the love of The Spirit wash over you. Rest awhile - my brother, my sister."

Sit with the word. Read the word, with Jesus as The Word beside you.

The church is built on a foundation of prayer, and prayer is not a lone voice, but two voices working together – you and God communicating together.

We rest awhile in each other's presence. God's concerns then become ours. Now we pray awhile. We detect which bit of the foundation of prayer needs work – which areas need underpinning, to strengthen the church and the world above. Now is the time to read the papers together, to watch the news together, to walk past the homes of those in need, and to pray.

Action should arise from preceding prayer, so we now work in tandem with God, to do the things He calls us to do. Now is the time to deliver Mrs. So and So's groceries, remembering that we don't go on our own, but God is coming with us, to minister to those He also cares deeply about. God is there in our phone calls – a third person directing the flow of our words and making us listen to the concerns of others. In all God asks us to do He is there as well.

Of course it isn't always easy. We get things wrong, and thank goodness for God's grace.

The present times have been perhaps the most difficult since the end of the Second World War. People feel on edge, and understandably lash out in frustration.

Rog and I get cross with the party political sniping on the tele, and have turned over channels to watch Peppa Pig instead! But perhaps God is watching us instead, and trying to get a word in edgeways – like: "Try not to be so critical. The MPs are my workers and are working flat out to help the country. Give them a bit of leeway, and pray for them." Of course we don't always listen because we enjoy having a moan, but it is helpful to remember that God is with us and watching us – monitoring our words and actions, and guiding us. It might just help us to think before we speak.

But even when we get it wrong God still wants to be our companion. He loves His creation with passion, and no doubt sheds tears for it too, out of that love, as we do. There is still power in lament and trusting in the hope that all will be well in the end.

God is with us in all He calls us to do, and when we have acted then remember to return and - Rest awhile, and pray awhile.