

Sunday January 17, 2021
Scriptural Lesson: 1 Samuel 3: 1-10
Sermon Series: Awakening Part 1
Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

We are continuing with our Awakening series; a series where week to week, the preaching goal is to identify moments of scripture that might invite us to consider a different or fresh perspective of something that we might have never considered before;

- For this Church is the essence of what a true spiritual awakening is;
- It is that moment where you and I gain clarity;
- It is that moment where the Word of God strikes the fertile ground of our soul;
- It is that moment where something connects within us so deeply, that as a result we are truly transformed;

- And although sometimes our awakening moments within this series or beyond, may evoke some troublesome discoveries within us;
- For the awakenings and connections that many of us are finding within scripture; that are parallel to the global crisis of racism, poverty, corruption and more are quite unsettling;
- I stopped by to suggest that although these types of new awakenings are shattering to the souls that are only eager to sow seeds of God's love and nothing more;
- I would encourage you and I not to shy away from these discoveries that this horrific storm of senseless violence reveals;
- **For the hope** is that now that our eyes are open;
- **Now that our ears** our open;
- **Now that our hearts** are open;
- The hope is that perhaps the Holy Spirit can use this new found awareness, as a teaching moment; for

how you and I might continue the great work of leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and more;

- Leaders that have sacrificed so much; so that all of us can truly pursue the happiness that the Declaration of Independence proclaims that all humans have been given by their creator;
- So that you and I can continue this work until we have satisfied this proclamation that I have just stated;
- For the harrowing discovery that I believe many of us cannot unsee or disclaim anymore; **is that all humans** truly are not in the same position to pursue this happiness that the articles of this constitution declares;
- And before I receive potential pushback on this sentiment that I have shared;
- For some might suggest that one does not need money or things to be happy;

- Some might suggest that one does not need nice things to be happy;
- I will share with you that I agree with you on this;
- For it is not lack of monetary resources that I am suggesting is what makes a person unhappy;
- But on the contrary; **it is the constant dehumanization** and marginalization that makes people unhappy;
- **It is the lack of consideration** for the sacredness of human life that makes people unhappy;
- **It is the constant abuse of one's privilege** that makes people unhappy;
- **It is the constant gaslighting** that seems to occur for those who are on the oppressed side of history; (gaslighting is defined as manipulate (someone) by psychological means into questioning their own sanity.); that makes people unhappy;
- **It is the feeling of being unseen** that makes people unhappy;

- Or at least I can say that things like this makes me unhappy;
- **And so these are some of the thoughts that I am bringing to this text of 1 Samuel on this Martin Luther King Jr. weekend celebration;**
- For I am drawn to this story of Samuel and Eli for many reasons;
- Part of my curiosity and appeal towards this text is witnessing a young person such as Samuel; step up and answer his call at such a young age;
- For scripture does not indicate how old Samuel actually is at this time in our text;
- What we do know in our scripture for today is that Samuel had reached an important period of his life.
- Samuel is described as a child, but that is no definitive indication of his age.

- The original word may refer to one of any age between an infant and an adult of forty years;
- Some scholars would suggest that Samuel's chronological age is 12 at this time;
- Either way, I believe that there is tremendous significance in this passage identifying that Samuel is young;
- For **The word of Jehovah was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision** (v. 1).
- So the fact that the Word of the Lord and the vision which Samuel witnessed, as recorded in this chapter, were so infrequent during this period in Israel;
- the true awakening of this text from my vantage point, is that the Word and call came to Samuel; thereby making him immediately recognized as a prophet.
- And why is that such a big deal one may ask?

- Well for starters; you and I often hear this sentiment expressed in church time and time again; that the youth are our future;
- This is why from a leadership perspective; **I am intentional** about empowering young people in every aspect of the Church; to be their best selves; as they discover what it means to share your time, talents, gifts, service and witness to the world and to the community of Church;
- **I am intentional** about making spaces in worship; (not just on Youth Sunday); but every Sunday;
- From playing the organ, to playing the cello; from reading scripture to leading a small group and possibly more;
- **I am intentional** about making spaces in leadership for young people;

- Thereby giving youth and young adults a healthy amount of training, encouragement and time; so that they can fulfill the mission of taking on the metaphorical helm of this boat ; the church;
- With the confidence and assurance in God; that they will be able to weather any storm that they may come up against;
- **The other appeal of this text for me is centered around the words of Samuel, “Here I am.”**
- In light of all that is going on in the world, I am hoping to explore in this message or at least start the conversation on this idea of what does it mean when you and I say “here I am.”
- How are you and I called **to be here** in the midst of a world that has been literally divided into two for a myriad of reasons?
- How are you and **I called to be here** in the midst of a world that is fighting a serious epidemic of sickness,

racial violence and division, food insecurity, poverty without relief and more?

- What do we mean when we say **here I am**?
- **Are we talking about** being present in attendance only?
- **Are we professing to be here** as a silent witness?
- **Are we proclaiming to be here** as an active participant?
- **What does** being here involve?
- Is it enough?
- Do we need to do more?
- What if we don't know how to do more?
- What if we don't know how to be here?
- Church, I don't have any preconceived judgments or expectations or even answers to any of these tough questions that I have asked.

- These are questions that I am inviting us to think about and even wrestle with as it pertains to who we are and **why we are here?**
- Because I do believe that if we spend some significant time on these tough questions; then part of the solution will begin to reveal itself to how you and I might conquer these horrific metaphorical storms of racial injustice, social injustice; violence and more;
- Storms dare I suggest that **we all are in the dead center of;**
- How do you and I live out this concept of being here?
- What do we mean when we say “Here I am?”
- So perhaps how you and I might begin to address this statement of what it means when you or I say “here I am”, is by discovering perhaps what Samuel meant when he made the same declaration;

- So diving a little more into Samuel to discover his meaning;
- The urgency for Samuel to accept this call that God put on his heart; the Word reveals to us that Samuel slept no more that night.
- The first revelation and the accompanying message had greatly impressed him so much that how could one sleep after this encounter?
- However, this young person, Samuel was also fearful about telling Eli about his calling,
- And the other greatest celebration is that Eli called out to Samuel with an openness to learn what the Lord had said to him.
- **And as a side note, that is an area that the church needs to do better in from my perspective;**
- **In recognizing that** these young people are skilled;
- **In recognizing that** they are resilient;

- **In recognizing that they are** capable of doing more than often what the Church allows them to do;
- This is another reason why I envision First UMC as being this teaching sacred space; that affirms the voice and call of this younger generation;
- **A generation that will** no longer tolerate the wreckage that comes from social isolation and discrimination;
- **A generation who is not** afraid to embrace who they are;
- Whether they identify as a he, she, they or them;
- **This generation church** is more than capable of leading the church into better days;
- **It is time that the former generations** stop bashing the younger generation with claims that they are confused and have lost their way as a result of; but to

take on the role of Eli with these young people and beckon them to “**tell us more!**”

- **Tell us more** how the violence in school affects you;
- **Tell us more** how this pandemic is affecting you;
- **Tell us more** how all of these isms of social injustice is affecting you....
- Young people, we hear you, we see you....**tell us more;**
- Perhaps in the spirit of inquiry and endorsement is how you and I of the former generations actually learn how to be here;
- By not hindering our youth and young people because it challenges the traditions that you and I have become accustomed to;
- Traditions that have actually fueled the very isms that we are desperately trying to eradicate for once and for all;

- **Perhaps how you and I** really learn to be here, is by making space for the newer generations to help the church become more adaptive, resilient, courageous and inclusive.
- For there is a lot to be learned through this exchange between Eli and Samuel;
- And I am so grateful for Eli's example to the former generations of today;
- For because Eli embraced Samuel and heard him fully;
- Samuel's way of being here involved becoming the recognized leader of the religious life of the people (v. 20).
- From Dan to Beersheba Israelites came to Samuel at Shiloh.
- Moreover, the word of the Lord through Samuel was spread throughout Israel.

- This church marked an important difference from the times when there were rare occurrences of the Word of the Lord.
- Samuel's willing response to the Lord had released Israel from the dearth of divine revelation (vv. 19–21).
- Making it possible for those to really hear the Word of God.
- **After all, isn't that what being here is all about?**
- Being able to be here so that we can learn how to be in communion and covenant with God?
- Being able to be here so that we can be in communion and covenant with one another?
- In a world where there is so much noise; so many distractions; so much evil; so much hatred; so much senseless violence and more;
- **If you and I cannot** hear the voice of God;

- Then we will not know how to make a way in the wilderness;
- **If you and I cannot hear God**; then we cannot see the provisions that the Spirit of the Lord is making on our behalf;
- **If you and I cannot hear God**; then how can we really be here?
- **If we continue** to dismiss and silence the voice of the newer generations who are anxiously waiting to be able to don on the breastplate of righteousness;
- All they are waiting for is for someone to help them to put it on;
- Then we will continue to leave ourselves open to spiritual warfare and spiritual death;

- If you and I refuse to hear the voices of these younger generations; as they cry out for peace, mercy and justice for all;
- Then perhaps the real sobering awakening is that we as the church won't be here.....
- For there is a lot that we can learn from Eli in this chapter;
- But dare I say that there is even more that we can learn from the Samuels of today;
- So tell us more Samuel;
- Tell us more youth;
- Tell us more young adults;
- Here we are.....Here I am.....Tell us more!

Sunday January 17, 2021

First Lesson: Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18

Gospel Lesson: John 1: 43-51

Sermon Series: Awakening Part 2

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

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- Leaders that have sacrificed so much; so that all of us can truly pursue the happiness that the Declaration of Independence proclaims that all humans have been given by their creator;
- So that you and I can continue this work until we have satisfied this declaration that I have just shared;
- **And so the preaching focus of the earlier sermon gleaned off of young Samuel's acceptance of his call and his response to the call from the Lord was "Here I am."**
- What I invited us to do individually is exploring what does being here actually involve from us?

- In this sermon, I want us to focus on how we learn to be here as the church.
- And so the reality for me is that until we do the hard work of exploring what it means to be here as an individual;
- It would be nearly impossible to define then how the church might be here.
- Because the goal of doing this individual work of discernment and inquiry is **so that we can then help** others by God's grace, strength and wisdom learn to be here;
- **So that we can help others** embrace who they are and whose they are in God's eyes;
- **So that we can help lead** others with the primary help of the Holy Spirit; into a journey of exploring how their time, talents, gifts, service and witness impacts our local church communities and the world.
- So you see church, for me this intentional work goes hand in hand;

- And I really invite you to take a look at a later time; the Part 1 portion of this message so that you may receive a more comprehensive picture;
- **But let me just also name and affirm that in many ways our gospel agrees with everything that I have just stated;**
- Because in unpacking our gospel this morning;
- At this time Jesus began to recruit disciples, more especially that small band of twelve men who later were to be called apostles.
- Now we do not have the record of the call of each one, but, in the account given us by John, three elements of the call stand out.
- **First, there is the drawing power of Christ.**
- I am convinced that it was not John the Baptist's introduction as much as something in Jesus which caused Andrew to go from the one to the other.
- You see church there is a magnetism about Christ and the Gospel which draws people to Him;

- **A magnetism** that invites people to discover who they are and whose they are in Christ Jesus;
- **A magnetism** that invites people into discovering how their unique spiritual gifts can help face the storms of racial and social injustice and more!
- A magnetism that invites people to discover how they might advance the kingdom of God.
- **Second, you and I are witnessing the testimony of dedicated people in this particular gospel.**
- John the Baptist brought Andrew, who in turn brought Peter; and then Philip brought Nathanael.
- You see church there is a naturalness, for the one who believes in Him, to testify about Jesus.
- It is proven that normally how one discovers Christ for themselves is because of the natural conversations that prompt us to reach out to others through our own story.
- For it doesn't take a lot of bible knowledge to invite someone into the faith of Jesus Christ;

- My spiritual awakening is that it is perhaps us learning how to be here in all of our spiritual organic gifts that brings others into the fold of Christ.
- Perhaps it is your calming and affirming presence that makes space for another to follow;
- Perhaps it is your vulnerability and willingness to share that makes space for another to follow;
- Either way I trust that my thoughts are not that far off based; if on the contrary negativity and judgment tends to keep people miles away from the church;
- So what I am suggesting is that by you and I learning the art of what it means to be here;
- It is by you and I doing the tough work of embracing our spiritual gifts and intentionally using them in the body of Christ and throughout our communities; through our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness along with the unique skill sets that each and everyone has;

- This is how we makes spaces for others to be here...
and I mean REALLY BE HERE.....
- You see church, looking back at our gospel this morning; in a straightforward way Andrew testified,
We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth.
- So in this church, there is the invitation of Christ.
Prior to Jesus appeal to Philip, **Follow me**, there is this picture of the seeking Christ who found Philip.
- Had Andrew and Peter told him of Christ? (They were from the same city.)
- Had Jesus learned of Philip and gone in search of him?
- You see church, Not everyone responds to the call to follow Christ as readily as did Andrew and Philip.
- There was Nathanael who was more like Thomas in his skeptical approach to what his friends claimed to be true.

- Philip's answer to this attitude was equal to the occasion: "Come and find out for yourself."
- As a result Nathanael came, and seeing was believing, largely because of Christ's superior knowledge and insight.
- Jesus could say, **Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!**, because **he himself knew what was in man** (2:25)
- And leading into my third point of what is occurring in this gospel; because Nathanael was an exceptional example of a chosen people, one in whom the moral law of Moses had become effective.
- The bottom line church, we are witnessing the positive ripple effect of how one person; Philip did the work of exploration upon himself to learn what it means to be here;
- Thereby making a space for another person to discover how truly valuable and sacred they are to God.

- For verse 48 of our gospel reveals a powerful interaction between Jesus and Nathaniel that I do not want us to miss;
- In fact I implore us not to miss the power of this exchange;
- Because verse 48 states ⁴⁸ Nathanael asked him (Jesus), “Where did you get to know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.
- And I don’t know about you, I am struck by the positive feeling that energizes my soul and Spirit as I recognize in this our gospel someone feeling fully seen for perhaps the first time ever in their life;
- Similar to the Woman at the Well and the Woman with the issues of blood; I stopped by to suggest that there is nothing more powerful than a person who finally feels seen.

- In fact as we prepare to celebrate Dr. King's birthday, that is all that his transformational leadership was about—ensuring that everyone is seen;
- His ministry and leadership was all about everyone being allowed to actively participate and contribute to in his moral imagination revealed as cultivating a Beloved community!
- As I reflection on Dr. King's brilliant scholarship of what it means to create a Beloved Community;
- I think back to some of the footage that I saw when the lyrics of "We Shall Overcome" was sung in what would soon become the turning point of the Civil Rights Era;
- -And seeing with my own eyes; Blacks and whites, marching down the Alabama streets side by side together....
- - for a brief moment, I believe America caught a glimpse of this "beloved community"

- Another instance where I have seen a glimpse of the beloved community, is when people from all backgrounds came together during the awful 9-11 attack; trying to place the pieces of their lives back together again.
- Another instance of a beloved community that I hope will form is after this tragic aftermath of the insurrection of the Capitol; I am hoping that a strong alliance will be formed that involving a beloved community that is genuinely concerned for the welfare and equality of a community of all people, regardless of race, religion, or political belief becomes priority.
- A beloved community where all people can share in the wealth of the earth and all that she produces.
- A Beloved Community where poverty, hunger, homelessness, crime and violence can and will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it.

- A beloved community where Racism, bigotry and prejudice is replaced by a redeeming spirit of human family.
- I am envisioning church a Beloved Community where international disputes would be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power.
- A beloved community where Love and trust triumphs over fear and hatred.
- Church I am praying for a beloved community where Peace with justice would prevail over war and military conflict.
- I am working towards a beloved community where we all can embrace that each and every one of us is a child of God and of equal intrinsic worth..
- A community that reflects that I'm no better than you....you're no better than me.....we are equally as valuable and precious in God's eyes.....

- This Church is how I believe we can be here and REALLY BE HERE;
- Having consistent messaging by way of teaching, preaching, service, worship that strives to help all people feel seen;
- Helping people to get out of the Egypt wilderness. Of social injustice, marginalization and oppression, one person at time; as we **all walk** into the land flowing with milk and honey together; with the words of our first lesson Psalm 139 in our hearts;

1

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

2

You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.

3

You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

4

Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.

5

You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

6

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

14

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.

15

My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

16

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

In your book were written

all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.

17

How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!

How vast is the sum of them!

18

I try to count them—they are more than the sand;

I come to the end[a]—I am still with you.

- Let the Church say Amen!

-