

## ***Don't Hang Up!***

*1 Samuel 3<sup>1-10</sup>; Psalm 139<sup>1-9</sup>; Revelation 5<sup>1-10</sup>; John 1<sup>43-end</sup>*

*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.  
[1 Samuel 3<sup>9</sup>]*

However dangerous we know it to be, so many of us still try to second-guess God and his plans. In this Epiphany Season, when we deliberately remind ourselves of the awesome majesty of God and as we know him in Jesus, we need that constant reminder that God holds the strings, our strings, and that he is in charge!

In three of our readings for today we experience the anxiety of the people involved as they encounter God in an unexpected way:

- ✘ Samuel lived in a time when faith was at the lowest ebb: **the word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.** The religious ceremonies continued at the Temple and, when I read the text, I noticed that it says, **Samuel did not yet know the Lord and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.** Before we get to the summary, **Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord** (in v.20, beyond our reading), Samuel has to learn to listen.

I am too much of an optimist to give in to any view that we live in times that are a spiritually barren as those that Eli lived in: God hasn't given up on the world and the Church and neither should we! Yet, having lived through the spiritually fruitful years on the 1980's, I am aware that things are not as they were. There are still trustworthy prophets, but there is less of an appetite to hear what they say. Instead of Samuel's, **speak, Lord, for your servant is listening**, many of us would rather have undisturbed sleep! Need I say more than observe that if we call people to pray a handful will come, but if we invite people to a meal (a happy memory at the moment) then only a handful are absent!

Eli's house was rejected by God because, metaphorically, they had hung up on what he had to say. We haven't hung up, yet, but many have God on hold!

- ✘ John in his Revelation gets caught up in the emotion of his vision, where hope is born in the appearing of the **Lamb**.

One of the things that has contributed to the dip in the spiritual temperature of the Church and the people of God is the diminishing of our sense of awe. John had been distressed at the beginning of this section of the Revelation – **I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll** – but that distress was dissipated when he saw the **Lamb!** Amidst the music of the **harps** and the fog of the **incense** (always that glorious image of prayers ascending) the song emerges, **You are worth.** Here is the one who, through his **blood**, has **ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation.**

To raise the spiritual temperature we all should refocus on Jesus, the Lamb of God. In him and in him alone is our hope, our fulfilment, our confidence. To hang up on him is to give up. To know him is to live!

- ✘ Nathaniel had obviously some clear ideas of what a Messiah would look like – and Jesus wasn't it: **Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?** It was Philip's, **come and see**, that opens up new possibilities.

How many of us, during this lock-down, waste our time looking for the wrong thing: wanting what we had and what we think we want again. Jesus says, **come and see!**

Most of us have the gift of time so that we can refocus on what matters and spend time revitalising our relationship with God. Before you pick up the technology to spend time on social media or on games, spend time with God! Some time ago I set myself the challenge of spending 30 minutes a day in silence in God's presence: no words, no readings, no prayers! It took some time to get into and I had very often to reset the clock as I remembered 'urgent' things that needed to be done, calls to be made, emails to answer. But when it was just God and me it was so affirming. God never hung up on me.

It is the Psalmist that draws all of this together: God knows what we should be, God knows how we fulfil our purpose and calling, because he knows us. In knowing us, everything about us – actions, words, thoughts, motives, integrity - he calls us to **\*be\*** his.