

**The Rectorial Benefice of the East Vale  
Morning Prayer  
Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021 | Epiphany 2**

**Hymn**

**In Christ alone! my hope is found,  
he is my light, my strength, my song,  
this cornerstone, this solid ground  
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease  
my Comforter, my All in All  
here in the love of Christ I stand.**

**In Christ alone! who took on flesh,  
fullness of God in helpless babe.  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
scorned by the ones he came to save.  
Till on that cross as Jesus died,  
the wrath of God was satisfied,  
for every sin on Him was laid  
here in the death of Christ I live.**

**There in the ground His body lay,  
light of the world by darkness slain:  
then bursting forth in glorious day  
up from the grave He rose again  
And as He stands in victory,  
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,  
for I am His and He is mine  
bought with the precious blood of Christ**

**No guilt in life, no fear in death,  
this is the power of Christ in me.  
From life's first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
can ever pluck me from His hand  
till He returns or calls me home  
here in the power of Christ I'll stand.**

**The Collect**

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

*First Reading*

*(1 Samuel 3.1-10)*

A reading from the first book of Samuel.

The boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions

were not widespread. At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Responsorial Psalm*

*(Psalm 139.1-10)*

**R/ Search me out, O God, and know my heart.**

O Lord, you have searched me out and known me: you know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You mark out my journeys and my resting place: and are acquainted with all my ways. **R/**

For there is not a word on my tongue: but you, O Lord, know it altogether. You encompass me behind and before: and lay your hand upon me. **R/**

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: so high that I cannot attain it. Where can I go then from your spirit: Or where can I flee from your presence? **R/**

If I climb up to heaven, you are there: if I make the grave my bed, you are there also. If I take the wings of the morning: and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me: your right hand hold me fast. **R**

*Second Reading*

*(Revelation 5.1-10)*

A reading from the book of Revelation.

I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals; and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?' And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. And

I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.' Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They sing a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.'

This is the word of the Lord  
**Thanks be to God**

*The Gospel*

*(John 1.43-51)*

**Alleluia! Alleluia!**  
**Give thanks to the risen Lord.**  
**Alleluia! Alleluia!**  
**Give praise to his name.**

**God has proclaimed the just reward:**  
**'Life for all men, alleluia!'**  
**Alleluia! Alleluia!...**

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**

Listen to the gospel of Christ according to John.  
**Glory to you, O Lord.**

Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will

see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Come, let us praise the living God,**  
**joyfully sing to our Saviour.**  
**Alleluia! Alleluia!...**

**The Homily**

**Rev'd Angela**

Today in our readings from the Old Testament and the Gospel, we see a common theme that echoes through both readings, that is God's call to listen for him and to follow him. We hear about the young boy Samuel, who lived in the temple with the elderly priest, God called to him persistently until he answered, even though we are told the young boy didn't yet know God. The gospel tells a story of two friends, Phillip and Nathanael, who have an unexpected encounter with Jesus, that brought two very different reactions. All these characters had a call from God, a call to service and prophesy for Samuel and call to follow Jesus for Phillip and Nathanael. Samuel was unsure to begin with and needed encouragement, Nathanael needed some of his questions to be answered and Phillip just believed straightway. Like these people we are all different characters, and we all react to God's call in many different ways.

Thinking of Nathanael and his need for finding the truth and seeking answers to his questions, got me thinking about how to we find true facts today? For us, in the 21<sup>st</sup> C, the internet may be our first "go to" resource. However, we need to ask a question of the fact-finding website – can we trust the information we find there? What is reliable and what is fake? Fake News as become something quite normal in the past few years. The outgoing US president as used the Fake News Slogan as a way to influence the people, leading to disastrous consequences over the last few weeks. We have seen fake news about the virus, about treatments and vaccines, whether to wear mask or not etc..... It is very difficult to stay grounded in a world full of news, fake news and social media all of which can influence what we believe on our new feeds.

Nathanael just wanted some more information about Jesus, was he really the person John claimed he was? Was he really the Messiah they had been waiting for, the one Moses wrote about? Nathanael was also sceptical about Jesus' hometown, saying can anything good come out of Nazareth? I fear we could say such things about people from certain places. There were no high-tech options for Nathanael, only an invitation from his friend Phillip to 'come and see'. A simple command to come and experience Jesus for yourself and then see if you believe. Nathanael was very surprised that Jesus not only knew

his name, but many other things about him. In conversation with Jesus, he discovered that Jesus acknowledged that he was a true Israelite living in harmony with God and this seemed to be a turning point in their relationship.

That knowledge of Nathanael that Jesus seemed to have, is spoke about in our psalm this morning, Psalm 139, my favourite psalm. This psalm draws us into the mystery that God as knowledge of us, warts and all, he knows our rising, our resting and the words on our lips. Human beings strive for knowledge throughout their lives, some are more competitive than others in the acquisition of knowledge. However, we are told in the bible 'that we can only know in part, but we are completely known by God. This knowledge can be amazing and awe inspiring but also pretty scary because God knows our inner most thoughts. Maybe those words of Psalm 139 came to Nathanael's mind as he reflected on Jesus' insights into his character. One of God's defining characteristics is a detailed, all embracing knowledge of us, stretching back before we are born and embracing everything we are. Perhaps Jesus' knowledge brought Nathanael to his epiphany moment, when he recognised Jesus for who he was. It certainly was significant as he heaped upon Jesus great titles – Son of God and King of Israel.

This short passage from John includes such rich teaching about our call 'to follow' Jesus, to be his disciples in our time. Together Phillip and Nathanael helped each other to understand who Jesus was and they began a journey of faith as disciples. We too are called to accompany each other on a journey of faith, as we try to understand Jesus' call in our lives. Nathanael was surprised that Jesus knew his name never mind the other things about him. We too may be surprised what he knows about us and like Nathanael we can wonder 'Why would God be interested in me?' Some of us will be like Phillip, keen to follow straight away bringing others to come and see. This story shows us that wherever we are Jesus calls us and from the story of Samuel we see that God is persistent in his calling, he keeps asking until we answer.

So, some questions we should reflect upon; firstly 'Have we had our epiphany moment?', where and when have Jesus' purposes been revealed to us; secondly 'Are we looking and listening out for him in our lives?'; finally, 'Are we able to invite others to Come and See? We need to remember that our God is a living God, that speaks to us, today, so we need to keep our senses awake to catch glimpses of his glory in our lives and be ready to listen to his call.

Thinking of Jesus' calling his disciples I would like us to listen to a hymn called "The Summons" or "Will You Come and Follow Me" which is a Scottish Christian hymn, written by John L. Bell in 1980. Its text contains thirteen questions asked by Jesus in the first person. The hymn is

based on Mark 1:16–20 and alludes to Jesus calling his disciples to follow him.

I hope as we listen to this hymn, we can reflect on how Jesus may be calling us to be his disciples today.

### *Hymn*

**O', God, you search me, and you know me  
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze  
When I walk or lie down, you are before me  
Ever the maker and keeper of my days**

**You know my resting and my rising  
You discern my purpose from afar  
And with love everlasting, you besiege me  
In every moment of life or death, you are**

**Before a word is on my tongue, Lord  
You have known its meaning  
through and through  
You are with me beyond my understanding  
God of my present, my past and future, too**

**Although your Spirit is upon me  
Still I search for shelter from your light  
There is nowhere on Earth I can escape you  
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight**

**For you created me and shaped me  
Gave me life within my mother's womb  
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you  
Safe in your hands, all creation is made new**

### **The Intercessions**

Let us pray to God, who guides all who seek him in faith.

May your church always be alert in your service, ready to respond to those who seek you with the invitation 'come and see'. We pray for June, our bishop, and in our joint parish cycle of prayer with Lagunda we pray for our family Sunday services, children's club, Café Church and other initiatives for young people in both our parishes.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Cast out the distrust that separates people of different cultures and backgrounds. May the Holy Spirit enter into the dark places of this world to banish ignorance and injustice, replacing it with understanding, freedom and peace.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

As Andrew brought his brother to Christ, so may we bring him to those who are close to us but do not yet know the fullness of his love. If any are called to particular service in your purposes, give them ears to hear and wills to follow you.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Have mercy on those who seek rest and cannot find it; give them hope in Christ who calls those who are weary and overburdened to find their rest in him. We remember especially in our prayers the sick, and among them... May they experience in our support, human friendship and divine love.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Grant eternal rest to those who now see your glory in all its fullness (we remember especially...). May our faith sustain us in this world as we follow Christ to eternal life.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

In a moment of silence, we bring our own personal prayers...

**Merciful Father accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

### **Hymn**

**I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard my people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin  
my hand will save.  
I have made the stars of night  
I will make their darkness bright  
Who will bear my light to them?  
Whom shall I send?**

***Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord?***

***I have heard You calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.  
I will hold your people in my heart.***

**I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have borne my people's pain.  
I have wept for love of them.  
They turn away.  
I will break their hearts of stone,**

**give them hearts for love alone.  
I will speak my word to them.  
Whom shall I send?**

***Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord?...***

**I, the Lord of wind and flame.  
I will tend the poor and lame.  
I will set a feast for them.  
My hand will save.  
Finest bread I will provide  
till their hearts be satisfied.  
I will give my life to them  
Whom shall I send?**

***Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord?...***



### **Prayers for the sick this week**

Elizabeth Thomas  
Kath Loughor  
Eunice Wood  
Catherine Brynach  
Margaret Price  
Stephen Gray  
Brendan

Betty Hicks  
Colin Bailey  
Sophie Sabit  
Helen  
Kevin Hurst  
Orla Elizabeth O'Grady  
Lorna Powell

### **Hymn Requests**

If you have any hymn requests for our Zoom worship please send them to one of the clergy team. We will do our best to put requests into our services over the next few weeks.

### **Bible Study Group**

If you would like a link to our Bible Study Group which meets on Wednesdays 6-7pm every 2 weeks starting on 20<sup>th</sup> of January, please email Rev Angela at [angelacooper03@gmail.com](mailto:angelacooper03@gmail.com). It is a very friendly informal group and is open to all.