



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Sermon for 10.00am, Sunday, 17 January 2021
Bible Readings: 1 Samuel 3:1-20 & St John 1 43-end
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

Life was different then ...

If someone asked you to describe the key feature of your formative years what might it be? Idyllic? Or challenging? Educated close to home or sent to boarding school? Whatever it was, possibly, it did not emulate that of Samuel who featured in the first Bible reading that Judy read to us. Samuel's life and works are primarily documented over the first 25 chapters of the book named after him and we may recall that he was the much-longed for firstborn child of his mother Hannah. She, however, realising the wonderful gift that God had bestowed on her, determined that once Samuel was old enough to cope without her care, she would take him up to Shiloh, the high place of worship in Israel and, as we heard described in the reading, he was 'ministering to the Lord under Eli'.

I suppose the closest equivalent today to Samuel's life and living accommodation would be that of a young boy ministering to the Archbishop of Canterbury, sleeping on the floor alongside the high altar in the Cathedral and being responsible for locking and unlocking the doors each day. It's inconceivable in our day and age isn't it? Having grasped the scope of Samuel's daily responsibilities and living arrangements, we then learn that he is destined for even greater service. He is to be the Lord's communicator to his people for, up until then, we heard that 'The word of the Lord was rare in those days'.

It's hard being the messenger...

In our own times, it can be a daunting prospect to be called to undertake a significant task, particularly, if we know that we are to fulfil the role of someone who has been passed over or, who no longer fulfils the position for which they had been appointed. Such was the case for Samuel taking over the role of the Lord's messenger to his people, which Eli should have fulfilled as High Priest. Eli was not without perception, for he it was that realised the Lord was calling Samuel in the night but, sadly, Eli had failed to fulfil his own calling.

Poor young Samuel then lies sleepless for the rest of the night pondering the Lord's message, in the full realisation that in the morning Eli will ask him what that message was. A message that would set the ears of all in Israel flapping when they learn that Eli and his family are destined to fall in punishment for their misdeeds. Young though Samuel was, he did not shirk from telling the truth and in that moment, people knew that they could trust him, for we heard 'As Samuel grew up the Lord was with him and none of his words fell to the ground. All Israel knew that he was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.'

We don't need to be perfect before ...

From Samuel's life and times, we now spring to St John's Gospel and find Jesus calling his disciples to follow him. From the four Gospels and other writings of the New Testament, we know that those disciples Philip, Andrew, Peter and Nathaniel will, in their time, be as faithful as Samuel. Of course, just like Samuel, they were not without their faults, they too at times slide backwards in their service to God. In recognising their faults, they learnt from them and became stronger for it. They moved onwards in faith becoming trustworthy witnesses to the Lord's life and ministry sharing his message of salvation with others.

Now, a concluding thought for us to ponder and where I started in my welcome to this service. If even one chapter of the Bible was written about our Christian life and works, what might it describe? Would we too be called trustworthy servants of the Lord? Whoever wrote today's Collect understood our wavering faith when writing about 'the poverty of our nature' and the need for 'renewal of our lives', fortunately, as always, the remedy is close at hand if we are determined to search for it. The value of our church liturgy is that it encapsulates succinctly what the Bible accounts describe. The liturgy does not gloss over our failings but it doesn't dwell on them either rather, it gives us pointers by which we can follow Christ more closely. This morning's Post Communion prayer provides the remedy for our wavering faith, being our need of both Word and Sacrament, for spiritual growth to enable us to become trustworthy servants of the Lord: here is that prayer now:

God of glory,
you nourish us with your Word
who is the bread of life:
fill us with your Holy Spirit
that through us the light of your glory
may shine in all the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen