

Dear friends

I hope you are all well. To those of you who have already received your covid vaccinations, can I say both congratulations and thank you; other than staying at home where possible, getting vaccinated is the greatest single thing each of us can do to help our country move out of this horrible pandemic. I am eagerly waiting my turn!

Congratulations as well to those of you who correctly spotted last week's deliberate mistake. In introducing the service, I got a week ahead of myself, and called it the Second Sunday of Epiphany. Well, now it is, and here is our service for today, recorded at home this time. I hope you enjoy singing along with the hymns, as well as joining in with the words of the service. If you find it helpful to have those words in front of you, they are attached to this email, along with the text of my reflection and the weekly newsletter. You will see that we shall be continuing with online worship only for the next few weeks, as we keep the wider situation under review.

<https://youtu.be/ziw4S9HaloE>



[Service for the Second Sunday of Epiphany](https://youtu.be/ziw4S9HaloE)

An Act of Worship for the Second Sunday of Epiphany (17th January 2021) from the Kingsbury and Baxterley Group of Parishes, with a reflection by Revd John on...

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/ziw4S9HaloE)

Thank you to those who joined the Zoom compline and Zoom Bible studies last week; we shall be continuing with those on Tuesday and Wednesday, with the same log-in details.

As ever, do give me a call if there is anything which I can help with, or if you would just like a chat. I do value us being able to keep connected, in whatever way we can, during these times when we can't meet in person.

With every blessing

John

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Worship for Second Sunday of Epiphany 17 January 2021

Welcome and Introduction

Greeting

God in Christ has revealed his glory.

Come let us worship.

From the rising of the sun to its setting

the Lord's name is greatly to be praised.

Give him praise, you servants of the Lord.

O praise the name of the Lord.

Hymn 'Brightest and Best' sung by St Martin's Voices

Prayers of penitence

Christ the light of the world has come to dispel the darkness of our hearts.

In his light let us examine ourselves and confess our sins.

Lord of grace and truth,
we confess our unworthiness
to stand in your presence as your children.
We have sinned:
forgive and heal us.

The Virgin Mary accepted your call
to be the mother of Jesus.
Forgive our disobedience to your will.
We have sinned:
forgive and heal us.

Your Son our Saviour
was born in poverty in a manger.
Forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.
We have sinned:
forgive and heal us.

The shepherds left their flocks
to go to Bethlehem.
Forgive our self-interest and lack of vision.
We have sinned:
forgive and heal us.

The wise men followed the star
to find Jesus the King.
Forgive our reluctance to seek you.
We have sinned:
forgive and heal us.

May the God of all healing and forgiveness
draw us to himself
and cleanse us from all our sins,
that we may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Gloria – from Mass of St Cedd by Peter Nardone, sung by St Martin's Voices

Collect

Eternal Lord,
our beginning and our end;
bring us with the whole creation
to your glory, hidden through past ages
and made known
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Reading: 1 Samuel 3.1-10

Gospel Reading: John 1.43-end

Reflection

My thoughts and prayers go out to parents and children who now find themselves, once again, faced with the challenge of home schooling, and of course to teachers working hard in new ways to resource that. One of the challenges in home education is that so much of what young people today are required to learn never figured in the curriculum when us oldies were at school. I have seen a few posts on social media this week, including some from distinguished academics and published authors, lamenting "What on earth is this "fronted adverbial" thing that my child is supposed to include in their writing? We never had them when I was at school – or if we did, we never knew they were called fronted adverbials." And no, if you're wondering, I don't know what they are either. If you want to find out, can I suggest asking an eight year old.

But the basics of grammar we did get taught. Nouns; those are things. Adjectives: the words we use to describe those things. And verbs: those are the doing words. And it seems to me that when we are talking about God, nouns and adjectives are a lot less useful and important than verbs. We can tie ourselves up in knots trying to describe what God is, but we are on much surer ground when we talk about what God does. God creates, God gives life, God sustains, God cares, God guides, God promises, God judges, God redeems, God saves.

And amongst those different verbs that we can use to talk about God's activity, there is one that appears consistently in Scripture, and that we find reflected in the readings today. God is a God who calls. To Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God calls, though the creatures hide

from that call in their guilt and shame. To Abraham, God issues the call to leave his homeland and set out on a journey to a new country. Later, God calls Moses to lead the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land. Again and again, God calls the prophets to speak God's word, and through the prophets calls the people to new beginnings and new hopes. Our God is a God who calls.

So in our Old Testament reading, God calls Samuel, a boy who had been dedicated to God's service in the temple as an infant, under the tutelage of the priest, Eli. From being an assistant to Eli, Samuel is called to be a prophet in his own right. In the Gospel reading, God in Christ calls first Philip and then Nathanael. "Follow me", says Jesus. Two words that sum up God's call to the disciples, and his call to us.

And I just want to stay with those readings for a moment with this question. If "to call" is the verb that speaks of God and Jesus in these passages, what verbs should we use to describe our response? What are we to do, knowing that God is a God who calls?

I'd suggest the first verb is "to listen". I was tempted to put "to hear", because doesn't it all start with hearing God's call? But there is an important difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is something that happens; but listening is something that we choose to do or not to do. God calls Samuel in the dark hours of the night; but although the lad hears that call each time, it is only at the end that he truly listens, attentively, discerning that in the sounds he hears there is the voice of God. And Samuel responds, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." To listen is to be open and ready to hear God's call, in whatever way it comes. And having listened and heard God call to us, the next part is to trust. Just as listening goes beyond hearing, so there is more to trusting than mere believing. To trust in God's call is to have confidence in the one who is calling in such a way that it leads to action. The one who trusts is ready to step out in faith and to speak out in faith, knowing that the one who calls us is faithful and will equip us for the task to which we have been called. In the Gospel reading we see Nathanael's suspicion of a supposed Messiah who hails from such an unprepossessing place as Nazareth give way to a confident faith in the one who has called him: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" It is in that faith and with that faith that Philip and Nathanael, like Simon and Andrew before them, embark on the journey of discipleship.

We listen, we trust, we act; and it may also be that like Philip, who responded to Jesus' words of "Follow me" by seeking out his friend Nathanael and inviting him, too, to hear God's call, we share the good news that we have heard with those around us. God is a God who calls us, personally and individually; but who does not call us alone, but into the great company of God's people who, together, find themselves listening, trusting, acting and sharing on the basis of the great call that we have received.

So may we be ready to receive and to respond to the call God gives us to follow in obedience and trust.

Hymn 'Will you come and follow me' sung by St Martin's Voices

Prayers of Intercession

Closing Prayer

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.

Blessing

Christ the Son of God
perfect in you the image of his glory
and gladden your hearts
with the good news of his kingdom;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with you and remain with you always.

Hymn 'Alleluia sing to Jesus' sung by St Martin's Voices