



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – Epiphany 2 – January 14, 2018: The Call of Samuel

The call of Samuel.

I had no clue what that religion teacher was talking about. I wondered what this “Eucharist” thing was. So, when we got back to the classroom, I sat the kids down on the floor to read them a story and before we began I said, “And now everybody, who can tell Mr. Hino what a Eucharist is?” They, of course, had been trained by that religion teacher and they all chimed in unison, “Holy Communion!” And I looked at them and I said, “Very good.” That I get. But there are times when I simply don’t understand why God would call me to do anything, with all my flaws and foibles. But I know I’ve been called.

There are also times when I was being called by God but simply didn’t know it, just like Samuel in today’s story didn’t know it, thinking that it must be somebody else or my imagination. So, all I can say is thank God for discernment and the grace to be able to process these things in a community of faith, a community of faith that often helps me see and understand things that I cannot see and understand for myself.

And many times for me, call comes not in the form of a voice, but in the form of a needling, nagging urge to do something that doesn’t make any sense to this brain in my head that so often rationalizes and gets in the way of my spirituality and my faith.

Forgive me, those of you who have heard this story before. Forgive me, but when I think of call, I always think back to the first time I took communion in church. At the time, it made no sense to me that it would be something that I’d want to do, because I hadn’t set foot in a church on Sunday morning pretty much ever. In fact, I think the only time in my life up that point that I had been in a church on a Sunday morning was when I was carried in by my mother or my father to be baptized at the insistence of my very staunch Anglican grandmother. After that, I never set foot in a church on a Sunday morning until I was 30 and had been teaching at an Episcopal school. The waters of baptism are persistent – and so is God. Here’s what happened.

When I was 30 years old, I went back to teach elementary school at my junior high alma mater, St. John’s Episcopal School in Tumon Bay, Guam, the Episcopal school where we went to chapel every Wednesday, where we had Holy Communion every Wednesday, but where I never took it because at that time we were under the 1928 Prayer Book and you had to be confirmed first. My parents never bothered to make that happen for me and so I watched my classmates go and take communion every Wednesday for three years while I sat in the pews.

And so when I was a third-grade teacher back at the school, I took my kids to chapel every Wednesday morning and we did this funny thing I’d never heard of before, this thing that they called Morning Prayer. Then one day the religion teacher got up in front of all the kids and said, “Next week we will have Eucharist so go home and make sure you have your parents’ permission to take part.”

Epiphany 2 – January 14, 2018, cont'd

I had no clue what that religion teacher was talking about. I wondered what this “Eucharist” thing was. So, when we got back to the classroom, I sat the kids down on the floor to read them a story and before we began I said, “And now everybody, who can tell Mr. Hino what a Eucharist is?” They, of course, had been trained by that religion teacher and they all chimed in unison, “Holy Communion!” And I looked at them and I said, “Very good.”

So now I knew with this Eucharist thing was. I also knew that I wasn’t going to take part – that I was outside the circle yet again. But it nagged at me for several days and I kept hearing this voice saying, “How can you be a good example to those students and sit in the pews while they walk up there and take that Eucharist thing?”

And I kept thinking to myself: And what the heck am I supposed to do about it? And so off I went to the religion teacher who referred me to the chaplain and when I walked into his office said, “Hey I remember you!” which will give you insight to the kind of student I must’ve been. I explained my quandary to him and he said, “But you’re baptized, right? Didn’t you tell me that when you were a student here 20 years ago?” How this guy remembered that, I will never know except to say that it must’ve been the hand of God. And when I replied that I had indeed been baptized he said, “You can take communion. No problem. We’ve change the rules since you were here. We’re under a different Prayer Book now.” And I thought to myself, “What the heck is a Prayer Book?” I still had a lot to learn.

So then the morning came and this Eucharist thing started and the time came to take communion and I let all the kids go before me so that I could watch what they were doing and copy them. And when it came my turn I put out my hand, took the host, put it in my mouth, and turn toward the chalice and I was literally a different person – a completely different person down to my core. It was like my feet were anchored to the ground like the ground was a magnet and my feet were made of steel. I went up to that altar rail one person and returned to the pew a completely different person. And 22 years later, here I am standing as your priest in this Cathedral. Talk about a Holy Communion!

That’s my story. The thing is, we’re all called to different things in different ways, which is why the today’s psalm says:

For you yourself created my inmost parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

God knit us together in our mothers’ wombs and now it’s our job to become that wonderfully created thing that has always been beautiful in God’s sight.

What is that for you and me? What were we knit together in our mothers’ wombs to do for God, and for the kingdom of God, and for the people of God, and to help make God beautiful?

No one can really know what that answer for anyone else, but it is my fervent hope that it comes to us in prayer, or in a dream, or in some extraordinary way that jars us because it doesn’t make any sense, and it forces us to think about it rather than dismiss it. And then you and I get to live into the holy possible of it all to become that wondrous and marvelous thing that God has specifically created of us to be, bearing in mind all the way that God needs you, the church needs you, and I need you to be that thing that you were knit together in your mother’s womb to be.

Epiphany 2 – January 14, 2018, cont'd

*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 trace my journeys and my resting-places *
and are acquainted with all my ways.*

*Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, *
but you, O Lord, know it altogether.*

*You press upon me behind and before *
and lay your hand upon me.*

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

*For you yourself created my inmost parts; *
you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

Amen.