

## **The Sunday Missive – January 14, 2024 The Second Sunday after the Epiphany**

### **Hymn 371 Thou, whose almighty word**

Thou, whose almighty word chaos and darkness heard,  
And took their flight;  
Hear us, we humbly pray, and, where the Gospel day  
Sheds not its glorious ray, let there be light!

Thou who didst come to bring on thy redeeming wing  
Healing and sight,  
Health to the sick in mind, sight to the inly blind,  
Now to all humankind, let there be light!

Spirit of truth and love, lifegiving holy Dove,  
Speed forth thy flight!  
Move on the waters' face bearing the gifts of grace,  
And, in earth's darkest place, let there be light!

Holy and blessed Three, glorious Trinity,  
Wisdom, love, might;  
Boundless as ocean's tide, rolling in fullest pride,  
Through the world far and wide, let there be light!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBvP23duU08>

### **The Collect of the Day**

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### **1 Samuel 3:1-20**

Now 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." Then the Lord said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him."

As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.

## **Psalm 139**

O Lord, you search me and you know me\* ***You know my resting and my rising; you discern my purpose from afar.***

You mark where I walk and where I lie down\* ***All my ways lie open to you.***

Before ever a word is on my tongue\* ***You know it, O God through and through;***

Behind and before you besiege me\* ***Your hand ever laid upon me.***

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me\* ***Too high, beyond my reach.***

O where can I go from your spirit\* ***And where can I flee from your face?***

If I climb the heavens, you are there\* ***If I lie in my grave, you are there.***

If I take the wings of the dawn to dwell at the sea's furthest end\* ***Even there, your hand would lead me; your right hand would hold me fast.***

O search me, God and know my heart\* ***O test me, and know my thoughts.***

See that I follow not the wrong path\* ***But lead me in the paths of life eternal.***

## **1 Corinthians 6:12-20**

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body

with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

### **Hymn 757 Will you come and follow me**

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown? Will you let my name be known,  
Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,  
And admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.  
In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=neUZJCLqYzg>

### **John 1:43-51**

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 toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get 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.”

### **Rule of Three – Epiphany2B**

The Rule of Three is a pattern used in storytelling, wherein some aspect of the story occurs three times, with minor variations. The first two instances build tension, and the third releases it by incorporating a twist; or the heroine is given three tests and triumphs on the third.

The work of Shakespeare abounds with Rule of Three activity, *Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *King Lear*, and many others employ the mechanism to enhance their dramatic resonance.

Of course, ‘threes’ appear throughout human activity: "On your marks, get set, go", "Veni, Vidi, Vici", "Lights, camera, action", "Readin', Writin' and 'Rithmetic," Bingo, bango, bongo."

We tell jokes based on three familiar characters in the same situation: A Rabbi, a Priest, and an Imam walk into a bar. The first two react stereotypically, the third does something outrageous; a Blonde, a Brunette and a Redhead. Or we repeat the same idea three times, but with a twist on the third one: The “Dick Van Dyke Show” *par exemple*, had Morey Amsterdam say to a bald guy, "Can I get you anything? Cup of coffee? Doughnut? Toupee?"

The rule of three is a deep psycho-cultural phenomenon, so it's not only a matter of Church doctrine that the three men I admire most, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, have landed right here on the coast; it's because of our primal mid-brain longing for the order, resolution and comfort the Trinity provides.

Martin Luther's Reformation partner Philip Melancthon is said (rather waggishly) to have remarked, “Two things I'm counting on in heaven: Escape from theologians, and an explanation of the Trinity.”

As he lay dying (of a bad cold, it is said – at the age of 63 – ok, yikes) Melancthon wrote down on a little piece of paper by his bedside his reasons for not fearing death. On one side of the note were the words, "You will be delivered from sins, and be freed from the acrimony and fury of theologians"; and on the other, "You will go to the light, see God, look upon his Son, and learn those wonderful mysteries you have not been able to understand in this life." We all want to know that God pervades life; the treble presence of divine Creator, human Redeemer, and mystical Sanctifier is meant to satisfy this desire.

We will become whole when we think we know and we feel we are known. The psalmist cries: "If I climb the heavens, you are there; if I lie in my grave, you are there. If I take the wings of the dawn and dwell at the sea's furthest end, even there your hand would lead me, your right hand hold me fast." It's no coincidence that Indiana Jones has to pass three tests to get to the Holy Grail. The Path of God, (Father?) The Word of God (Son?) and The Breath of God (Holy Spirit?) George Lucas and company plucked an ancient soulstring, and audiences everywhere adored it.

Today's story is about Samuel, whose very name means "The Name of God." This is the Samuel who will go on to be the last of the Prophets and the first of the Judges in the Hebrew Bible. It is Samuel who will anoint the first kings of the Israelites, Saul and, more importantly, King David. Young Samuel is sleeping under a counter in back of the temple, when he's awakened by a voice: "Samuel!" He runs out to his boss Eli, and says, "Here I am, Sir, all present and correct!" But Eli says, "I didn't call you; go back to bed." So he goes and lies down again. Bingo. The voice comes again, "Samuel! Samuel!" Again, Samuel gets up and goes to Eli, "Here I am; you called me." "I did not call, my son; go lie down." Bango. The voice comes again, a third time: "Samuel! Get up!" That's the turning point, when matters come to a head and Samuel is transformed into his full self. Eli realizes that it is God who is calling the boy and tells him so. After that, Samuel grows up, the Lord is with him and lets none of his words fall to the ground. From then on, all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knows that Samuel is a trustworthy prophet of the Lord. Bongo.

The Bible tells the story of humanity's three opportunities to comport itself according to the cosmic rules of goodness that is the

Will of God. To cease trying to make the world conform to our will, and instead embrace standards of obedience is the only way to ensure none of God's words fall to the ground. Humankind, consisting of Eve and Adam and their offspring fail to do this: Strike One. Out we are kicked, from the perfection of ignorance that is paradise, to begin again in the reality that comprises this mortal life. But our lessons are far from learned, and we wander far away, Strike Two. God washes the Earth clean with a flood and starts again.

In his typically dramatic way, Paul gives examples of the things that occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire the evil things that got them all drowned: 'Flee from the worship of idols, and do not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put God to the test, as some of them did. If you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. And stop complaining. Nothing has happened to you that is not common to everyone.'

Following the Rule of Three, our salvation history culminates in the climax of God's interaction with humankind, the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Philip says to Nathanael, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, it is Jesus of Nazareth." Nathanael is skeptical: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth, this sounds like another false alarm, pie in the sky fanatic, another chance for us to fail." But Philip persists: "Come and see." When he sees Nathanael coming toward him, Jesus says, "I searched you and I know you, I know your resting and your rising; I discern your purpose from afar," or words to that effect. And Nathanael replies, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! And Jesus says to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you're going to see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending."

When Paul refers to us as the "people upon whom the ages of ages has come, he is pointing out that humanity's third, and he would say final opportunity has arrived, to get it right. Jesus is called the Ancient of Days, because the opportunity he embodies for us has always been present in our strivings and struggles, our defiance and devotion, our failures to follow God and our new beginnings. Jesus is our savior because he completes the story of humankind. Jesus is God's purpose

and personality. Jesus is God's punchline and our cleanup hitter; our only true purpose is to follow him home.

### **Hymn 542 Christ is the world's true Light**

Christ is the world's true light, its Captain of salvation,  
The Daystar clear and bright of every land and nation;  
New life, new hope awakes, for all who own his sway:  
Freedom her bondage breaks, and night is turned to day.

In Christ all races meet, their ancient feuds forgetting,  
The whole round world complete, from sunrise to its setting:  
When Christ is throned as Lord, all shall forsake their fear,  
To plough-share beat the sword, to pruning hook the spear.

One Lord, in one great name unite us all who own thee;  
Cast out our pride and shame that hinder to enthrone thee;  
The world has waited long, has travailed long in pain;  
To heal its ancient wrong, come, Prince of Peace, and reign.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t90l8jt2rJg>

### **Life**

Life! Ay, what is it? E'en a moment spun from cycles of eternity. And yet, what wrestling 'mid the fever and the fret of tangled purposes and hopes undone! What affluence of love! What vict'ries won in agonies of silence, ere trust met a manifold fulfillment, and the wet, beseeching eyes saw splendors past the sun! What struggle in the web of circumstance, and yearning in the wingèd music! All, one restless strife from fetters to be free; 'til, gathered to eternity's expanse, is that brief moment at the Father's call. Life! Ay, at best 'tis but a mystery!

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