

“Seek Ye first the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness
and all these things shall be added unto you.
For--we do not live by bread alone,
but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Hallelu—Hallelujah—AMEN!

Grace & Peace to you, Dear Friends,

I hope you are staying well and safe during this COVID Pandemic. This scripture above: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God” (Mt. 6:33) is one that can help us in these troubling times. It gives perspective to what is truly “essential” and what will give us the “abundant life” that Jesus promises to us his followers.

The KINGDOM of GOD—What does this mean? In a sentence: it is what life would be like on earth if God were king and the rulers of this world were not. Joy, patience, peace, self-control would abound and there would be salvation and justice for all. In the Lord’s Prayer, we pray, “Thy kingdom come”. As Christians, we are called to live & proclaim the Kingdom of God—on earth and in heaven.

How does this relate to the focus scripture of today? **READ 1n Samuel 3:1-10*******

Samuel is very young and inexperienced. He doesn’t recognize that God is calling him. ---And it takes the older, experienced Eli to encourage him to respond to God’s call. We know that even when we are older, we don’t always recognize God’s voice. Finally Samuel says, **“Speak God. Your servant is listening.”**

There are at least 3 ways we can help ourselves to recognize God’s voice and know God’s plan for us.

1. **SCRIPTURE:** “God’s love is new every morning” (Lamentations 3:22) “Those who wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:31) “He restores my soul” (Ps. 23:3) These are passages of scripture that have always sustained me. It for ever amazes me that I hear God’s voice in these powerful words. **The Bible is our Holy Book** and it is the people’s witness to God in our lives. We are not alone—but surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. Samuel on his own, might not have realized the call that the Lord was giving to him. So often God’s voice comes to us through the voice of friends or even strangers.

Let us be open to the possibilities!

2. **PRAYER:** This is a deep inner need that all humans have. We want to connect to the source of our being. In this way we see clearer the “Kingdom” and like Samuel we can know it is the loving presence of the Holy One. God is always **with** us and God is always **for** us.

Jesus gives us **the Lord’s Prayer (Mt. 6:9)**

Within it are the 4 basic elements of prayer:

Praise O, Holy One,

Confession forgive me for--

Thanksgiving thank you, God for--

Petition: I pray for---

Of course some of the best prayers are just conversations with God: Hello God., I’m really “down” today. Give me strength & help me to see the glass half full & not empty. Encourage me to “count my blessings”.

3. BE SURPRISED: Perhaps it is the sun lighting up the icicles, the little nuthatch at the feeder, the neighbour who dropped by to say “hello” or the comment of a friend on the phone.-- “Open my heart to the joy & pain of living”. God’s call/voice is so present if we let the Spirit rise. The Lord is Holy Mystery and Wholly Love. And the “call” of the Sacred forever brings hope and healing. Be open to the possibilities!

The word **Samuel** means “**lent from God**”. Samuel’s mother, Hannah had prayed for this child to be born. In the scriptures she says : “the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore, I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord” (1 Samuel 27-28). As Samuel grew and faithfully conveyed messages from God, it was obvious God was working through him.

I came across this story that aptly shows how the call of God enables the Kingdom of Love to be sent out to bring healing, hope and peace to the troubled world. It is called, **The Wise Woman**.

A wise woman found a precious stone in a mountain stream. The next day she met a traveller who was hungry and she opened her bag to share her food.

The traveller saw the precious stone and asked the woman to give it to him. She did and he left, rejoicing in his good fortune. He knew the stone was worth enough to make him very wealthy. But a few days later he returned.

“I’ve been thinking,” the traveller said. “I know how valuable the stone is, but I give it back to you in the hope that you will give me something even more precious. Give me what you have within you that enabled you to give me the stone.”

The Kingdom of God is more precious than gold. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us:

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you.

Ask and it shall be given unto you,
seek and you shall find.

Knock and the door shall be opened unto you.

**We do not live by bread alone,
but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.**

Hallelu,-- Hallelujah.”

When we hear God beckoning to us, may we, like Samuel, respond:

Speak God, your servant is listening.

AMEN!

Prayer: Life-giving God, we thank you for life & all its goodness. Comfort and sustain us when sorrows fill our hearts. You bring to our world **Light, Love & Healing**. We pray for your Kingdom to come into in our hearts and give **Peace** to our soul. May we be your witnesses to bring life & love to others. In the Holy Name of Jesus, we pray, Amen.

For the Merry Heart:

1. Be kind to unkind people. They need it most.
2. Love, is what makes you smile when you’re tired.
3. Times flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.
4. A rubber elastic band was confiscated in class by the algebra teacher because it was a weapon of math disruption.
5. I checked in to the Hokey Pokey clinic & I turned myself around.

Well—I’m going to “love you & leave you”. Stay safe! Be at Peace.

Shalom, Annalee