

Reflections for 17th January 2021

2nd Sunday of Epiphany

Listen

I have a favourite story from Laurie Lee's book, *Cider With Rosie*, which is based on his experience of growing up in a Gloucestershire village in the early 1900s. He describes his first day at school, and how he came back home feeling very unhappy. His mother and sisters tried to find out what was wrong, so he said,

'They never gave me the present.'

'What present?'

'They said they'd give me a present.'

'I'm sure they didn't.'

'They did! They said, "You're Laurie Lee, aren't you? Well, you can sit there for the present." I sat there all day but I never got it!'

Our Old Testament reading is a story about the prophet Samuel, at the time when he was a young boy learning to serve in the place where God's people came to worship. Samuel – a bit like Laurie Lee – was hearing, but not understanding. The story tells us that 'In those days the word of the Lord was rare.' So Samuel heard the word of the Lord, but, because he wasn't used to it, and so he didn't recognise or understand it, or know how to respond. Fortunately Eli, the old priest who was training Samuel, had the wisdom to understand what was going on, and he guided Samuel to recognise and respond to the voice of God, by being ready to say:

'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'

Perhaps the word of the Lord is rare in our own day, or, a bit like Samuel in the story, it may well be that recognising and understanding the word of the Lord is rare in these days. But we can do something about that, if we will learn to be ready and expectant that God will 'speak', that is, that we will experience – in whatever way – a sense of God's guidance, and God's calling for us. If we listen, then we may hear, and learn to understand, and respond in faith – and be ready to say, as Samuel did:

'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'

Revd John Waller

Speak, Lord, to our listening;
speak, Lord, to our hearing;
speak, Lord, to our soul's deep understanding
and give us the faith to answer your call. Amen.

Bible readings: 1 Samuel 3. 1-10; Revelation 5. 1-10; John 1. 43-51

Story: 'Samuel Hears a Voice' (based on the Old Testament passage)