

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

January 21, 2024

Old Testament Reading; 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 3: 1-10

Responsive Reading; Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18

Epistle Reading; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6: 12-20

Gospel Reading; John 1: 43-51

### **Sermon; Go Lie Down**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Be in a place where God can speak to you and answer if (I mean when) He calls.

Two weeks ago, my sermon title was, “Arise, Shine!”, and today’s message is titled, “Go Lie Down”. Sounds like I got the cart before the horse but apparently that is how God planned it. So, let’s run it up the flagpole and see who salutes.

In our Old Testament reading we find Samuel, who was dedicated to God by his parents, to serve under the tutelage of the high priest Eli. Samuel’s sleeping quarters are by the Lamp of God which is a flame that is kept burning at night and put out (or covered) at daybreak (kind of a holy place).

Samuel is a young lad and very anxious to serve Eli to the best of his ability. As the story goes, three times Samuel hears God call his name and thinking it is Eli, he rushes to Eli's side. On the third attempt Eli figures out that the kid must be hearing God and tells him, "Go lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak Lord, for your servant hears,'" so Samuel went and lay down. The rest of the story is that Samuel did hear and respond, and the rest is history.

A little side note here. When I was about six years old my dad used to read bible stories to my twelve-year-old sister and me, and I was very familiar with this particular story. One night as I was sleeping, I distinctly heard a voice say, "Jim, Jim, Jimmy wake up." When I opened my eyes there was no one in the room, Remembering the story I said, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." I listened and I listened, and it took about ten years for me to hear the Lord nudging me to think about the ministry.

So, moving right along, Eli told Samuel to lie down, in a holy place, to listen, and to respond. I believe that God tells each and every one of us to do likewise.

In our Psalm, David expounds on how God made us, knows us and is invested in us. In verse 3, David acknowledges how God knows us when we are lying down. In verse 5, he says, "You have hedged me behind and before, and laid your hand upon

me.” You are protecting me on all sides and even hold me in your hand. Then in verse 17 he says that the thoughts of God are precious. It is so precious that God makes us part of Him by His involvement with us and through us.

In Corinthians, Paul takes this precious union with God a step further. Paul points out that with great privilege comes great responsibility. If God is willing to be so involved with us, shouldn't we be just as involved with Him. God cuts a lot of slack in things like what foods we can eat but Paul knows that some people take a holy diet to be a serious thing. To them to compromise in the area of what foods we eat means it is OK to compromise in whatever suits our fancy. Paul goes on to say that although food is not that important, the body that the food goes into is. “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? “

When I wear a clerical collar, I am telling the world that I am yoked to Jesus Christ. I am telling the world that wherever I go I am taking Christ with me. As Christians we are all equally obligated, “for what we do in secret will be broadcasted from the rooftops.” Whenever any one of us attaches our body to an immoral activity, whether it be infidelity, dishonesty or any other despicable act we attach Jesus Christ to that activity. Or, as Paul puts it our bodies are a temple and if they are not kept holy, they pollute the house of God. Paul says, “Do you not

know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? You were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Jesus Christ died so that our bodies could be his temple. A little girl in a Sunday School class once asked, "If Jesus is bigger than the whole universe, and Jesus lives inside us, shouldn't He be sticking out somewhere?" Is Jesus sticking out of you?

With great privilege comes great responsibility.

In our gospel Jesus calls Nathanael. I get a kick out of the reaction of Nathanael when his brother, Philip, tells him that Jesus is from Nazareth and he responds, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (Note to self, good things can come out of the strangest places), OK.

Nathanael is convinced that Jesus is the Messiah because Jesus says that He saw Nathanael beneath the fig tree. Apparently, the branches of fig trees come all the way to the ground so no one could see a person under a fig tree.

Jesus said, "You will see greater things than these...Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." This sealed the deal. Some scholars surmise that

Nathanael was just reading the scriptures of Jacob's ladder and this comment completely blew his mind.

In summary, if you are going on a long trip you need to be sure your car is gassed up and ready for the journey. If you are going on a trip all the way to the kingdom of God you need to gas up your soul. To gas up for this trip you need to be in a place and in an attitude to hear God if, I mean when, He calls. When you pray do not pray as the Pharisees do in public but go into a closet and close the door. Go to your place near the Lamp of God. Go lie down and be filled with the fuel of the Holy Spirit.

Hallelujah and Amen!

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