

1 Samuel 3:1-10 (Second Sunday after the Epiphany—Series B)

“Known to Know”

Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield, CT

January 17, 2021

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is the Old Testament lesson recorded in 1 Samuel 3:

¹And the boy Samuel was ministering to Yahweh in the presence of Eli. And the word of Yahweh was rare in those days. There was no frequent vision. ²And it came to pass in those days when Eli was lying down in his place and his eyesight had begun to be dim and he was not able to see, ³and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, that Samuel was lying down in the temple of Yahweh where the ark of God was. ⁴And Yahweh called to Samuel. And he said, “Here I am.” ⁵And he ran to Eli and said to him, “Here I am, for you called to me.” And he said, “I didn’t call. Return and lie down.” And he went and lay down. ⁶And once more Yahweh again called Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called to me.” And he said, “I did not call, my son. Return and lie down.” ⁷Now Samuel did not yet know Yahweh and the word of Yahweh had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸And once more Yahweh called Samuel a third time and he arose and went to Eli. And he said, “Here I am, for you called to me.” And Eli perceived that Yahweh was calling to the boy. ⁹And Eli said to Samuel, “Go and lie down and when he calls to you, you shall say, “Speak, O Yahweh, for your servant is listening.” And Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰And Yahweh came and stood and he called as at the other times, “Samuel, Samuel.” And Samuel said, “Speak for your servant is listening.”

God is all-knowing. One of His divine attributes (qualities or characteristics) is that He is omniscient. God knows everything. God knows you inside and out. He knows you personally. As God said to Jeremiah, the same holds true for each one of you, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you” (Jer. 1:5 ESV). David wrote these words in Psalm 139, “O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. . . . For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed

substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them" (Psa. 139:1–16 ESV).

God is your Creator. He knows you. He knows all about you, every detail. Of course, that means the Lord knows the things that we don't want Him to know. He knows the thoughts and the desires of our hearts and minds, those things of which we are ashamed to tell others because of their shamefulness. Yes, God knows us intimately, and that means He knows our sins—the thoughts, words, desires, and deeds that fill us with guilt and shame. The Lord said to Israel through His prophet Amos, "For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins" (Amos 5:12 ESV). In the letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor that begin the Book of Revelation the Lord Christ tells each congregation, "I know you. I know your works. I know your situations. I know your love and faith and service." But the Lord Christ also says to the churches, "I know you. And I have this against you." God knows us. God knows His people. He knows our sins and our failures to always live as His people.

Perhaps it is this fact that makes the call narratives in the Bible all the more surprising. God knows those whom He calls into His service. He knows all about them, including their sins. He knows that they do not know Him. And yet, God calls. God appoints them for ministry and discipleship. Some examples:

Moses: "Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of Yahweh appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, 'I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.' When Yahweh saw

that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' And he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God" (Ex. 3:1–6).

Samuel in our Old Testament text today: Now Samuel did not yet know Yahweh and the word of Yahweh had not yet been revealed to him. And once more Yahweh called Samuel a third time and he arose and went to Eli. And he said, "Here I am, for you called to me." And Eli perceived that Yahweh was calling to the boy. And Eli said to Samuel, "Go and lie down and when he calls to you, you shall say, "Speak, O Yahweh, for your servant is listening." And Samuel went and lay down in his place. And Yahweh came and stood and he called as at the other times, "Samuel, Samuel." And Samuel said, "Speak for your servant is listening."

Nathanael in our Gospel Reading: "Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael said to him, 'How do you know me?' Jesus answered him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.' (John 1:47–48 ESV)

Saul: "Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do'" (Acts 9:3–6 ESV).

Each of these did not yet know God. But He knew them. He knew them and He called them to His service despite the fact that they were all by nature sinful and unclean, as are we. The Good News is that God does know us and chooses to call us to be His children in spite of our sins. The Good News is that God knows us in our sinful condition and entered into our humanity to rescue us from our sins, from death, and from the power of the devil. “[Jesus] said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners’” (Mark 2:17 ESV).

God has made Himself known to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. In Christ, we come to know God by faith. We know Him as the God who alone is just and holy, the God who is gracious and merciful, the God who became flesh and dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ in order to seek and to save the lost. Look how wondrously this was foreshadowed in Yahweh coming to Samuel. Verse 10, “Yahweh came and stood.” This is the language of incarnation! This is the language of God who knows people and comes to be with them in order to call them to faith and service. In the words of the hymnwriter, “The everlasting Son Incarnate deigns to be, Himself a servant’s form puts on To set His servants free” (*LSB* 331:2).

That freedom is yours through the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God made flesh. He is the very God who came to Moses in the burning bush, to Samuel in the tabernacle, to Nathanael in Galilee, and to Saul on the Damascus road. He is the Christ, the Good Shepherd, who knows His sheep and calls them all by name. He is the Good Shepherd because He gave up His life on behalf of His sheep. Jesus died on a cross to cover your sins with His blood. He died for all the shameful thoughts, desires, words, and deeds you ever have or ever will think, say, or do. Jesus came and stood in your place and

endured death and hell on the cross to save you from your sins so that He might give you the free gift of eternal life.

By means of water and the Word in Holy Baptism, God called you by name. He washed you in His name, the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In that saving flood, the Lord adopted you into His family with all the rights and privileges of being a child of the heavenly Father. In Baptism, the Lord called you to saving faith in Jesus Christ, your Savior and Lord. He also called you to serve Him with faith and good works as a disciple of your Lord Jesus. Through the hearing of the Word of God, God the Holy Spirit continues to call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify you in this faith and holy living. Through the Gospel in Word and Supper, the Lord delivers to you forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. He strengthens your faith and empowers you for service in His Church and in the world.

The God who knew you from before the foundation of the world loved you so much that He gave you His One-of-a-Kind Son, Jesus, to be your Savior. He who knows all your sins chose to save you from them and the punishment of death by giving His Son to be your substitute in His life and in His death on a cross. Risen from the dead, the Lord Jesus continues to call you through His Word by the power of the Spirit and to deliver to you His blood-bought forgiveness and life. Through the Word, God continues to reveal Himself to you as your Father, your Savior, and your Comforter who will never leave or forsake you. There is no condemnation, no guilt and no shame remain. Your sins are forgiven. God knows you as His beloved son or daughter. Amen.