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Weekly Letter – 2 June 2024

1 Samuel 3:1-10

‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’

Hannah was mocked by the women around her because she didn't have children and when she went up to the temple at Shiloh she prayed fervently for a child. She told God that she would dedicate the child to God's service if she had a son. Eli the priest thought she was drunk, but she said she was pouring out her soul to God. Eli said, 'Go in peace and may the God of Israel answer your prayer.' In due time, Samuel was born, and she did as she promised and went on to have other children.

When Hannah left Samuel with Eli her prayer has the same themes as Mary's prayer in Luke 1:46-55. Compare them if you have time and think about how those themes speak during an election campaign.

That provides the background to this week's passage, where Samuel is going to sleep in front of the Ark of the Covenant and thought Eli was calling for him. It took them both a couple of times to realise that it was God speaking to Samuel, but the word of the Lord was rare in those days and visions were not widespread.

There is a further bit of background that is significant: Eli's two sons assumed they could take over from him. They also assumed that they could take what they wanted from the sacrifices people brought to God. They started getting choosy and would take the meat before it was offered to God, then they wanted it raw so that they could cook it the way they liked it. God took a dim view of their self-serving behaviour.

The punchline of the reading is 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening,' but the real punchline is further on, with God's judgement on Eli's family: the sons for their behaviour and Eli for not doing enough about it. Looking forward in the Bible there is a strand of distrust of dynasties, and of wanting a king like other nations, in fact anything that gets in the way of God's leadership being recognised and followed.

Samuel tells the people a king will only take your daughters and tax your income, want food for his army and land for his cronies (1 Samuel 8:10-18). I wonder how that resonates with the current distrust of politicians and how we can hear God speaking into our situation today?

We are trying to hear God speaking to us about our direction as a church, but with the election campaign underway we are also praying for God's guidance for our nations. Let's pray, 'Speak, for your servant is listening' and wait for answers.

Simon

Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom at 10.30 am will be led by Rev Simon Walkling. We will celebrate Communion. Bible Readings: 1 Samuel 3.1-10: 2 Corinthians 4.5-12

**Cycle of Prayer in the Region – we will pray for Hall Street, Llanelli
Prayers for every household - we will pray for Brondeg, nos. 34-72**

Tuesday – 4th June - Tea and Chat - 2-4pm – Hand reflexology

Prayers for KwaZulu-Natal during their Election

There are elections going on all over the world this year, including South Africa. We have been asked us to pray for peaceful elections. Jacob Zuma, the previous president, has been banned from standing because of a conviction for contempt of court, but his party is making gains in KZN and there is tension with the African National Congress party, and concern that there could be violence around the elections. Please pray about the situation. You can find more information on the BBC News website: for example - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-68590538>

Big Green Week –13th – 18th June <https://greatbiggreenweek.com/>

There are events in Swansea to mark Big Green Week this year. The Environment Centre are holding the 'Pier Street Party' on 8th June from 10am – 2pm with music, information and refreshments <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/pier-street-party-great-big-green-week-and-bike-week-no-need-to-book-tickets-902383853397>

There are also two ecumenical services: 12th June at 7pm at St James, Uplands, where Simon will be taking part, and 14th June at 7pm at Aenon Baptist Church, Morriston.

CLAY POTS (Lectionary Readings: 1 Samuel 3.1-10 (11-20) and Psalm 139.1-6, 13-18:
Deuteronomy 5.12-15 and Psalm 81.1-10: 2 Corinthians 4.5-12: Mark 22.23-3.6)

Sometimes we are painfully aware how brittle and fragile we are.
Sometimes we feel the lightest breeze could blow us off course.
Sometimes we wonder why you trusted us to carry the treasure of Your presence.

Come to us in our weakest moments, when our uncertainty seems as real as our faith,
and gently refill us with your treasure.
May we see You shine through the fragility of our sisters and brothers,
may we begin to believe that You can shine through our fragility too.

Sometimes we are distressed at how large our cracks are.
We wonder if we are too broken to still be of service.
We marvel that You ever imagined that we could contain You.
Come to us when our cracks seem to be growing, when who we have tried to be seems to be crumbling.
May we see you shine through the fragility of our sisters and brothers,
may we begin again to believe that, cracked as we are, You can fill us to the brim.

John Miller Campbell (URC Prayer Handbook 2024)