

“We Live Into Our “Yes” to God”

Sermon for First Christian Church of Decatur, Georgia

Season of Epiphany, Sunday, January 15, 2012

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Holy Scriptures: I Samuel 3: 1-20 John 1: 43-51

1 Samuel 3

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

² At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; ³ the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. ⁴ Then the Lord called, “Samuel! Samuel!” and he said, “Here I am!” ⁵ and ran to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So he went and lay down. ⁶ The Lord called again, “Samuel!” Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.” ⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸ The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹ Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰ Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” ¹¹ Then the Lord said to Samuel, “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. ¹² On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his

house, from beginning to end. ¹³ For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. ¹⁴ Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

¹⁵ Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. ¹⁶ But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." ¹⁷ Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." ¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him."

¹⁹ As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.

John 1: 43-51

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "**Follow me.**" ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." ⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "**Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!**" ⁴⁸ Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "**I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.**" ⁴⁹ Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰ Jesus answered, "**Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.**" ⁵¹ And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Outline and Sermon Notes: **Trust, Transcend,
Transform**

*“Speak well about something that matters much
to the speaker and the listener.” -- James Childs*

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the Lord was with him

*and let none of his words fall to the
ground.*

²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba

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“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

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⁵¹And he said to him,

*“Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven
opened*

*and the angels of God ascending and
descending*

upon the Son of Man.”

Trustworthy.

Worthy of trust.

A trustworthy person is dependable, reliable, responsible, truthful, upright, faithful.

You, my friends, are trustworthy.

At a key moment in your life someone put their trust in you.

Someone trusted you

with that which was most precious, most valuable,

most treasured to him or her.

What is the most precious thing

anyone ever asked you to watch over, to take care of, to protect and treasure?

Their baby? Their home? Their car keys? Their friendship? Their password?

(If you've seen the list of the top ten passwords people use,

then you know they're 2-4-6-8, 1-3-5-7-9, & the incredibly complex 1-2-3-4-5.)

At some time, at some point in your life,

a blessed soul shared God's love with you.

Someone trusted you with what was most precious to them: the Good News.

By the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God,
the spoken word is followed up by an experience of Christ.

We heard the word, and then we had an experience of the holy.

For example, I learned about Jesus before I encountered Jesus,

when I encountered Christ through His followers who showed me mercy.

Some of us may have had an experience of the holy,

then heard the word, followed by the connection, the *A-ha* of enlightenment.

God will not be limited nor confined nor bound by small thinking.

There is no set pattern, no limit

to how we can connect with the holy and one another.

There are as many different and unique YES's to God

as there are stars in the sky and grains of sand on the beach.

Either way, the Way is good,

and the Way to love begins with trust.

Someone once told me that

what you win people with

is what you win them to.

Can you win someone to love with evil?

Or violence? Or hatred? Or prejudice?

Can anyone bully you into believing?

Can someone argue you into faith?

Have you tried it? How's it working for you?

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., believed in the practice of soul force,

in the power of love to overcome evil,

in the power of nonviolent social action

to bring about peace and social change
and civil rights.

What you win people with is what you win them to.

“The imperative of a life of Christian witness

flows from the grace of God's initiative,

God's "yes" to us." (James Childs)

God says YES to you.

You are good enough.

You are a Child of God.

God trusts you and loves you and will be with you forever and ever.

And in return you say YES

One day someone shared the treasure of the love of God, and you said YES

You said yes to an ambassador, a disciple, a follower of Jesus.

And "the heavens opened" and you were never the same. (*Amen!*)

Someone reflected toward you the nature and nurture of God, and you said YES

We are called to respond to the power of love with an affirming YES,

a YES that starts us on a journey of faith,

one in which we live and grow in community,

one that continues all our days.

We live into our YES to God,

a YES that originated in the one who Created and Creates.

Our YES to God is a direct response to God's YES to us.

Are you more likely to respond positively to someone you trust?

Someone who is trustworthy?

Are you more apt to trust someone who trusts you?

Trust is the foundation of healthy relationships.

Faith is relational.

Jesus said, "Follow me!" Trust me. Follow in my path; I will lead, you follow.

God said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do a new thing in Israel!" Trust me.

Relationships plus God's energy and grace become transcendent.

The love you share and the relationships you build are cosmic.

Jesus said, "You will see heaven opened."

God pointed out that Samuel's words would not fall to the ground.

Godly relationships become cosmic

Celtic expression: *“Heaven and earth are only three feet apart,*

but in the thin places that distance is even smaller.”

Martin Buber: *“Where is God? God is between people.”*

The beautiful result of transcendent relationships,

the by-product, if you will, is human transformation.

Nathaniel grows from prejudice to faithfulness,

from “Can anything good come out of Nazareth”

to “Rabbi, you are the Son of God”

“Samuel grew up...” The faithful child became a prophet.

“All Israel knew...” The community of faith was transformed and understood.

We are empowered, engaged, transformed, changed from glory into glory.

We once were dead but now we are alive;

we once were lost but now we are found.

We are given room to grow, power to change, and reason to believe.

Trust opens the window for transcendence;

Transcendence sets the table for transformation;

Transformed souls testify to the power of God,
and in God we trust.

Samuel said to God, "*Speak, for thy servant hears.*"

God said to the world, "*Listen, for my servant speaks!*"

God trusts you with the Good News.

God's work and play in you is cosmic.

God is healing and transforming the world through you, one relationship at a time.

Take the initiative

Is there a soul in your midst within reach of your voice and words of grace

who can be trusted with the Word of God?

Is there soul in the world who can't be trusted to hear of the love of God?

Trust God to be with you as you speak the Word and build relationships.

Someone once trusted you.

Have confidence in the loving spirit the dwells within.

What do you need to decide today?

What bridge do you need to build?

what path is set for you to walk?

what call do you need to make?

what door is ready for you to open?

what message do you have to share?

Trust yourself to share the Word that God has given to you.

Do so, be so, say so,

and "...you will see the heavens open

and the angels of God ascending and descending..."

All power be to the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen!