Last week we looked at the baptism of Christ and how that marked the start of his ministry. Today the lectionary readings focus a little more on calling and commissioning, being set aside for a task or a new way of understanding our lives in Christ.

In the Bible the Church is described as being the body of Christ and we are all part of this body. Each of us has a role to play in the life of the body and each of us is essential to the full functioning of the body. We are all have a place and a purpose in the body of Christ.

In Christ we are all called to be something, to do something.

Calling is an odd thing, when I think to my own call, it wasn’t through Angels and Archangels and all the Company of Heaven sat on the end of the bed saying, “go on Mark, get ordained”, it was a gentle realisation that my life was leading to something other, I guess call is God bursting through the usual and welcoming you to the un-usual.

In the Old Testament reading we read of the call of Samuel, this is a story of God bursting into the hum drum and creating something new.

In the reading we are invited into the Temple and here we meet Eli, the elderly priest and his young assistant Samuel, going about their regular ecclesiastic routines. Prayers said, readings read, Psalms to be sung, and the Temple light, the light of God’ has to be kept alight.

Eli and Samuel, were I guess a little like security guards too. They lived in the temple 24 hours per day ensuring the precious things of Israel were kept safe.

The reading tells us that ‘The word of the Lord was rare in those days’, suggesting that most of those days and nights in the temple could have been long and boring days and nights, seeing, and hearing nothing of God. Nothing spectacular was happening in the temple. Nobody was interrupting the services with visions of God. Nobody shouting about being healed from dreaded skin diseases, just watching, and waiting…

For Eli and Samuel life was much the same each day, check the lamp, trim the wick, sing the songs, do the readings and then all of sudden…….. God intrudes, God speaks, and Samuel is propelled from Temple boy to major prophet.

Now most people would expect God to speak when we are talking to him, during a service, when we are praying on retreat or when we are reading our Bibles, or certainly in Samuels days through the Earthquake, wind and fire, but not in this case.

God waits until Eli is asleep, and Samuel is nodding off “Samuel, Samuel” the voice of God is heard. No wonder Samuel was so confused as to who was calling him.

Like many people Samuel heard the voice of God when he was least expecting it and eventually, he responded, and he became one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament.

Speak Lord for your servant is listening.

As we considered earlier, we are the body of Christ, here in Spring Grove and I believe that God has called us all to be part of this body.

When I first felt called to become a Christian, I was unsure if God had got it right, I was very aware of my failings and faults, and that feeling of self-doubt can be one of the biggest barriers to us being fulfilled not just in Church but in so many aspects of life.

But Jesus tells us that we new creations, loved and accepted as we are warts and all, much as Nathanael was, Jesus knew all about Nathanael, and accepted and called him just as he was and so he calls us, as we are, loved and accepted warts and all.

As many of you will know I really enjoy being in the garage messing around with old cars. Quite often I will hear of a classic car that has been painstakingly restored, but has been stored for a long time, or stood in a museum, coming back into use following a recommissioning, oil changed, fuel renewed, tires pumped up and then back on the road or ready to belt around a track.

I wonder if today is the day of our recommissioning, maybe we have taken the foot of our mission pedal and placed God’s call on our lives into storage?

If so, what do you need to propel you back into ministry, do you like Samuel need to hear the call of God and respond Speak Lord for your servant is listening? Or do you need to have more confidence in the fact that you are a new creation, and that God has called you, yes you, not the finished article, but you as you stand right now, you may not have all the gifts in heaven and earth and you may not be perfectly Holy, but you are you, wonderfully created in the image of God and He fully knowing you has called you! As we say at the end of the services now you need to Go in Faith to love and serve the Lord.