

Sally Hammel: Good morning. Good morning prayers. Would you please stand as you're able, to join me in responsive reading found in your black Appleton's Psalter book, number 9.

Sally Hammel: I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart. I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

Congregation: I will exalt you. I will sing praise to your name, oh most high.

Sally Hammel: When my enemies turned back, they stumbled and perished before you.

Congregation: For you have maintained my just cause, you have sat on the throne giving righteous judgment.

Sally Hammel: You have rebuked the nations. You have destroyed the wicked. You have blotted out their name forever and ever.

Congregation: The enemies have vanished in everlasting ruins; their cities you have rooted out; the very memory of them has perished.

Sally Hammel: But the Lord sits in throne forever. He has established his throne for judgment.

Congregation: He judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with equity.

Choir: (Singing)

Dehlia Umunna: Good morning. Good morning everyone.

Congregation: Good morning!

Dehlia Umunna: Our reading today is from first Samuel three. The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. Then the Lord called Samuel, and Samuel answered, here I am, and he ran to Eli and said, here I am, you called me. But Eli said, I did not call you, go back and lie down. So he went and laid down. A third time, the Lord called Samuel and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, here I am, you called me. Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, go and lie down and if he calls you, say, speak Lord, for your servant is listening. So Samuel went and laid down in his place.

Dehlia Umunna: This morning I want to share with you from the theme you need an Eli or better yet be an Eli. You see, when Eli realized it was the Lord calling young Samuel, he instructed Samuel on how we ought to respond to the call of God, and Samuel obeyed and so began the manifestation of God's purpose, god's plan, God's providence for Samuel. You see Samuel's ministry began with a call from God, but its fulfillment came about with Eli's guidance.

Dehlia Umunna: Now at a time when we might be confused or uncertain about our purpose and calling, it is critical, it's imperative that we have someone in our lives, someone with experience, with discernment, someone who will encourage us to find and fulfill our purpose. This is what Eli did for Samuel at a time when young Samuel was confused and unsure of what to do. We all need individuals in our lives, ordained by God to assist in moving us from the ordinary to the extraordinary, from being religious, to being in relationship with God.

Dehlia Umunna: And I suspect that if Samuel did not have the wisdom of Eli, he may have completely missed the call of God for his life. We cannot walk the road of life alone. We've been called to community. So the question is, do you need an Eli? Have you an Eli in your life or better yet, can you be an Eli to others? In my line of work, I have the privilege and honor of representing in the gentle man and women and children charged with or accused of crimes. Generally they are poor, people of color, invariably struggling with addiction, mental health issues, and homelessness. And they are often pitted against the realities of systemic inequities and racism. And during those moments when they're the most vulnerable, most susceptible to despair, they need me to be an Eli. So a simple hello, a handshake, just addressing them by their name, when everybody else has been calling them a defendant, goes a long way in restoring their humanity. They need me to invest my time, my treasure, and talent in advocating for them when they cannot do so for themselves.

Dehlia Umunna: We all need Eli's in our lives to help move us towards our purpose. But the utmost question is, there are Samuel's out there and they need you to be an Eli. They need your guidance. They need your encouragement. They need your mentorship. They need your time. They need your talent. And yes, they need your treasure. So will you answer the call today to be an Eli for someone, even as you need an Eli in your life? Thank you.

Dehlia Umunna: Let us pray. Father, we thank you for the privilege of prayer. We thank you for your presence. We thank you for the ability to come before you and call upon you as our Father. We ask that you forgive us all our sins, Lord. We know that you've not called us to walk life alone, but you've called us into community. And we thank you for the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our ultimate Eli.

Dehlia Umunna: So Lord, we ask that you will open up our hearts today so that we can assist others. Oh God, we pray that you will open up our hearts today to be of help to come alongside others who desperately need us. We pray, Father, that in moments when we need help that we will receive help from others and be open to all possibilities that you have for us. We thank you in the matchless name of Jesus, your son. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.

Sally Hammel: Please join me in saying the Lord's Prayer on the back of your pamphlet.

Congregation: Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Sally Hammel: Please stand as you're able to join us, in singing the hymn, in your Crimson Hymnal. Judge Eternal Throne in Splendor. Number 363.

Choir: (Singing)

Sally Hammel: Please join us every Wednesday after morning prayers for Mem Cafe from 8:45 to 9:45 in the Student Oasis. You can enjoy coffee, conversation, and continued fellowship.

Sally Hammel: Now may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Congregation: Amen.