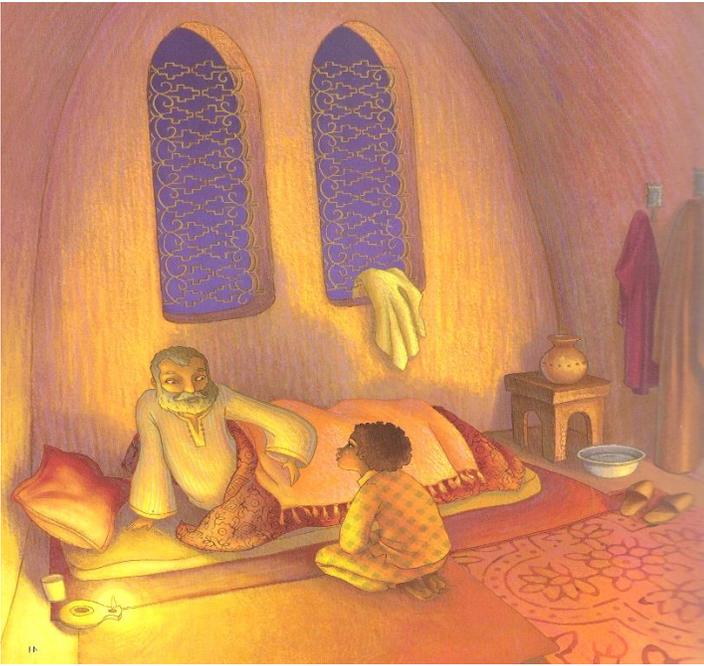


Holy Interruptions 3



Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in *Life Together*: We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and canceling our plans by sending us people with claims and petitions. We may pass them by, preoccupied with our more important tasks. . . . It is a strange fact that Christians and even ministers frequently consider their work so important and urgent that they will allow nothing to disturb them. They think they are doing God a service in this, but actually they are disdaining God's "crooked yet straight path."

Eli was an old priest. He had designated his sons to take over for him at the temple at Shiloh. When they went astray, he was too tired to do anything about it. Then God sent him an apprentice, Samuel. Eli thought he had seen it all, but he never anticipated how Samuel would wake things up.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; 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. Then the LORD called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' 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. 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.' Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. 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. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening." 1 Samuel 3:1-9

Some of what God shared with Samuel was criticism of Eli, for letting his sons corrupt the holiness of the temple. It is hard to hear the criticism of a younger generation, but it seems to be one of the cycles of life – fresh perspectives mean new learning, adaptation for new challenges. Eli had to let go of his privilege when God interrupted his sleep, both literally and metaphorically. In what ways are you sleeping through these transition times? In what ways are you interrupting the complacency of others to find a new vision for our time and place?

O God, Holy One, you dwell in temples and sanctuaries, outdoors and in the hearts of everyone, young and old: We pray for a vision of compassion and justice, of wisdom and equity, of people united and creation healed. We pray for a vision that awakens us to the need of our neighbours, and to the voice of the voiceless. We pray for a holy disturbance to interrupt us when we would silence or suppress a new generation of faith. We pray for ears that hear and words that heal and hands that help. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.