

Listen

1 Samuel 3:1-10

(preached June 2, 2024)

The scripture readings today all revolved around the theme of listening. This scripture spoke to me the most and gave me a lot to think about. Let's start with the history lesson.

Samuel takes place after the period of the judges and the book of Ruth. It starts with a time of transition. The rule of the Judges is ending and God foresees the people asking for a king, just like everybody else has. This is the call of Samuel. God will use him for this transition period and to choose the first 2 kings of the monarchy. It mentions in this scripture that the word of the Lord was rare in those days. God had been silent, not speaking to or through the high priests. The spiritual leaders were corrupt, the people were not obeying the law, so why should God spend more time talking to them. His silence was a form of judgment. In fact, in verses 11 - 14, God tells Samuel that the sons of Eli were corrupt so God was not going to use that family to spread His word. Let's get back to the beginning.

Samuel was a miracle baby. This book starts with the story of his mother Hannah going to the temple to pray for a son. Eli found her and after a little confusion (she was praying intently and Eli thought that she was drunk), Eli prayed that God would grant her petition. Fast forward a few years, God gave her Samuel and she in turn gave Samuel to the Lord. That amazes me. This woman wanted a child, prayed intently for a child, then turned around and gave this child to serve God. She kept her vow. The text states that she gave Samuel to Eli when he was weaned. I could not find any reference to what age that was. My best guess is between 3 to 5 years old. Not sure. When she gave Samuel to Eli, there was no guarantee that she would have any more children, but she was blessed with 3 more sons and 2 daughters.

When this story starts, Samuel is about 12 years old. Now a statement that may not mean much to us, pinpoints when the call to Samuel came. The lamp of God was a 7 branch golden candlestick that was in the Tent of Meeting, outside the veil, before the Most Holy Place where the Ark was. This candle stick burned every day from evening to morning. It had not yet gone out so it was probably before dawn. At this point the Tent, or temple, as it is called, was probably in Shiloh. This is also the lamp behind the miraculous burning of oil that is celebrated at Hanukkah. This lamp was the only source of light, and it was to be kept burning nightly as it was the symbol of the Light of God's truth to the world through Israel.

God called Samuel 4 times. Now Samuel heard the voice but did not recognize it. He thought that it belonged to Eli. Now it says in verse 7, that Samuel did not know the Lord. Samuel was serving in the temple, learning about God, but had never heard God's

voice, God's word had been revealed to Samuel. but not His voice. Considering what Samuel was being called to do, he needed to recognize God's voice. Samuel, like Saul, (Paul) experienced his call and conversion at once. Though it was not as traumatic for Samuel as it was for Paul, no blinding light. What is similar is that God used their names. This should not be wondered at, as Jesus is the Good shepherd and calls His sheep by name. Also, specifically calling your name gets your attention. Samuel answers. "Speak Lord for Your servant hears." When we are called to do something, or God impresses His vision upon us, are we as willing to answer in that way?

How often do we wish that we heard God's voice speaking to us directly? We often have decisions: who to marry, take a new job, trade in a car, the best way to care for a loved one? It would be so much easier if we heard the booming voice of God giving us specific directions. Instead we have to listen for the still small voice of God. This can be heard in a prayer time, a scripture reading, a walk in God's nature. There are endless ways that God is speaking or calling to us, after all He is a very creative God.

We turn to God in prayer. God listens to us. He does not always answer as we want but does hear us. God listens to us, we should listen to Him. UCC has a motto, saying, slogan, I don't know what they call it. God Is Still Speaking. We need to be still listening. I am unable to give you a specific regimen, pattern, or answer as to how God is speaking to you. I believe that He is speaking, and the way that we hear Him is different for each one of us. This sermon/homily may not have given you answers, in fact I am sure that it didn't. What I do hope to have accomplished is to have us all become more aware as to how and when God is speaking to us. The key is that we are paying attention, we are striving to hear His voice, and then to obey it, Speak Lord, for Your children are listening. Amen

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