

1-24-21

Sermon- Speak, Your Servant is Listening

Scripture- 1 Samuel 3:1-10, CTW PS 139:1-6, 13-18

Hymns- 461, 460, 442

Theme- Today we visit an example of when the Lord speaks to us specifically and changes our lives forever with His call to "now therefore go and make disciples." The beginning of each year is always a good time to think about where we are going in our faith life and what we would like to accomplish this year. Have you done that yet?

I. Introduction: Are you a good listener? Not listening many times means you're going to miss something important. How about listening to the Lord? Samuel is a good example for us to follow when it comes to listening to the Lord. How does the Lord speak to us? Why should we listen?

A. Are you attentive to the needs of others to be heard and understood? How is that for terminology...OUCH!.

Maybe instead of asking you, I should ask your spouse, or your children, or your parents. We are supposed to take into consideration the need of the speaker to be heard, and understood. Well, how's that working fer ya!

News flash, just because I am a pastor and as such I am supposed to be a good listener, don't presume that is always true...just ask **MY** family!

There are certainly some people that are better listeners than others and you've probably experienced that in your life. A person who is a sympathetic ear, that as you talk with them you can tell that they are genuinely interested in you and what you're saying. They are a good listener.

And then there are other people who aren't such good listeners. They are more into talking. They ask you how you are doing, but

before you can answer, they're already telling you about something in their own life. The thing with listening is that if you don't take the time to listen, you're going to miss things. You miss a turn because you didn't listen carefully to the directions someone was giving.

Have you ever exasperated someone enough to have them burst out with "Would you just shut up and listen to me for a minute!?"

Good listening takes **practice, discipline and constant reminders to keep on track**, to never give up honing your listening skills!

B. There are real-life ramifications if we do not constantly work on our listening skills. You miss an appointment because you weren't listening to what time the person said. You miss out on a friendship because you just didn't take the time to listen. Your spouse gets so tired of constantly having to repeat themselves that after awhile they just stop talking to you.

There wasn't a whole lot of listening going on in Samuel's day. Samuel, the boy that we heard about in the first part of today's lesson, lived around the year 1100 BC. He was living in the central part of the nation of Israel in a city called Shiloh.

Samuel lived with an elderly man named Eli who was the priest in charge of the tabernacle, the place where God's people came to worship the Lord. Although God's people were living in the Promised Land of Israel they weren't real interested in listening to the Lord.

II. The Passage Begins With These Ominous Words: "In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions" (1 Samuel 3:1).

A. At this point in history, only the first five books of the Bible had been written (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus,

Numbers and Deuteronomy) along with the books of Joshua and Judges. In addition to these writings, one of the primary ways that God spoke to his people was through visions. The Old Testament prophets would receive these visions from God and then the prophet would relay the message to God's people for them to listen to.

Unfortunately, God's people were not real interested in listening to what God had to say to them. When God's people stopped listening to the Lord, they missed things.

Although God repeatedly warned his people of the dangers of sin, his warnings often fell on deaf ears. God's people thought that they didn't need God to tell them what to do. God's people foolishly thought that they knew better than God. They got lost in sin and unbelief, wandering away from the Lord.

Does that sound familiar?

B. By not listening to the Lord they missed out on the relationship that he longed to have with them, a relationship of faith, of mercy, of forgiveness and blessing. The Word of God was rare not because God didn't want to talk to his people, but because they didn't want to listen to him. Still, the Lord kept calling and by God's grace some listened. Samuel and Eli were some of them.

We're not exactly sure how old Samuel was in this account. The term "boy" indicates that he was beyond the age of a young child, but not yet an adult. Samuel had been living with Eli at the tabernacle in Shiloh where he was receiving full-time instruction in God's Word.

Notice that it seems that having the Lord speak directly to Samuel was not something that either Samuel or Eli were expecting. It took three times before Eli figured out what was going on.

But when Eli figured it out, he knew exactly what to tell Samuel to do. "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening'" (1 Samuel 3:9).

And Samuel listened to Eli. The next time the Lord called, Samuel responded, "Speak, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10). Those few words say quite a bit about Samuel.

C. Did you notice what Samuel called himself? He calls himself "servant." Samuel understood his relationship with the Lord. The LORD was the one telling him what to do, and not the other way around.

Why was Samuel willing to listen to the Lord? Well, think about it. Who are the people that you listen to? **You listen to people who know YOU, and people who know WHAT they're talking about.**

Did you notice what the Lord said to Samuel when he came to him those three times? The Lord calls Samuel by name, "Samuel!" The Lord knew Samuel, and more than just his name. The Lord knew Samuel as one of his dearly loved children through faith.

Samuel lived in a place where he was daily reminded of what this God who called him by name would do for him. With every animal sacrifice that God's people brought to that place, they were pointed ahead to the perfect sacrifice that God himself would offer, one time for all people as the payment for every sin...

Jesus!

Samuel saw with those sacrifices, the love of a God who would stop at nothing to make him one of his own.

This was not some distant deity, this was his God, a God who cared about him, was willing to sacrifice for him, forgave and loved him. This was a God who knew him, a God who knew what he was doing.

Samuel knew that the God who called him was more than qualified to be trusted and followed.

This wasn't like one of those Holiday Inn Express commercials where the person walks into the operating room as the patient asks, "So how many of these have you performed?" And the man responds, "Oh, I've never done this before. I'm not really even a doctor, but don't worry, **I did stay at a Holiday Inn Express last night.**"

Samuel had seen the Lord's power and wisdom as he learned how God created the world and everything in it. He had seen the Lord's love in the promises made and promises kept to one day send a Savior for all people from his chosen people Israel. He had seen God's faithfulness to that promise in the Exodus of Egypt and the rescuing of God's rebellious people from foreign invaders.

Yes, this God was certainly worthy of Samuel's response, "Speak, your servant is listening."

III. So, are you THAT good of a listener? Unfortunately, when we listen to the world around us, it's not all that different than Samuel's day and age.

A. We also live in a world where people aren't all that eager to listen to the Lord. Instead of, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening" it turns into, "Listen, Lord, I don't need you to tell me what to do, I'll get back to you later!"

However, when tragedy strikes, then all of a sudden it becomes, "Lord, where are you? Do something, Lord!" Or maybe we would rather put the Lord on call waiting: "Lord, just a moment, I'm kind of busy. Can I get back to you at a more convenient time?"

The problem with not listening to the Lord is that you miss things. It makes me think of the number of people, even so-called Christians, who have been led to believe that something is God-pleasing even though it is contrary to the Bible.

Someone slapped the name “Christian” or “spiritual” or “loving” on it, and people believe it to be true because they have not taken the time to listen to the Lord and **study** his Word. By not listening to the Lord, they have been misled.

B. If We dare to call ourselves believers We MUST listen to the Lord in whom our belief and trust is placed! And here’s the neat part. You don’t have to wait for a vision or a voice in the darkness. We have it all written down for us in the Bible – God tells us the entire story from beginning to end of how he has brought salvation to his world.

PLEASE ACCEPT THIS AS FACT: THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY BOOK THAT READS YOU WHILE YOU ARE READING IT!

What Samuel only saw pictured through the sacrifices at the tabernacle, **we have seen fulfilled in God’s Son Jesus**, sacrificed at the cross as the payment for every sin of every person so that we can live daily in the peace of sins forgiven.

We have seen God the Father raise his Son back to life, declaring victory over death. In fact, God even tells us how the story will end. **Spoiler alert! The Lord wins!** He uses death to take us home to heaven, and one day he will return in glory to make all things perfect for his people forever.

IV. That is the God who knows you personally. He has come to you individually and personally and called you by name at your baptism. At that moment, God the Father called you son or daughter, and claimed you as one of his people through faith.

He pointed you to the cross and showed you the extent of his love for you, the blessings that now belong to you.

A. He came to you in the Lord’s Supper and said, “I want you to know that I love you and that I have forgiven you. Take and eat. Take and drink.” He comes to us through his Word and in his love warns us about what he knows to be spiritually bad for us. He calls us to repent of our sin, and to be

renewed in the forgiveness HE declares belongs to us. **This God knows us, and this God knows what he is doing!**

His qualifications have certainly not diminished over time. If anything, they have only been further reinforced.

The fact that God continues to reach out to people, speaking to us through his Word, even though people have repeatedly turned a deaf ear to him, shows He has patience, mercy and love.

This is a testament to God's faithfulness, grace and compassion.

The way that he continues to use such simple means, words written in His book, water sprinkled on a head, bread and wine eaten, to create and strengthen saving faith in people, is an everlasting witness of God's amazing power.

Yes, this God knows you and he knows what he is doing... therefore let us resolve anew this year to listen for, and to HIM!

"Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening."

Amen? Let Us Pray...