

2nd S after Epiphany (1/14/24 SJ, SM)

1 Samuel 3:1-10 - The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions. (2) One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. (3) 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. (4) Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." (5) And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down. (6) Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." "My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." (7) Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. (8) The LORD called Samuel a third time, 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. (9) 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 lay down in his place. (10) The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who speaks to us today through his holy Word, dear fellow redeemed:

The Bible comments that during the days when Samuel was a young man, **the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.** God didn't just appear in front of people, or talk to them daily as he did Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, or even as he once had with Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Yet the Lord *does* talk to us today; he just does it in a different way than he did during the days of Moses, Elijah or Samuel. He talks to us through his Word. So as we hear how the Lord talked to Samuel for the first time, let us consider today:

The Lord Is Calling: What Is Your Answer?

1. Do you hear his voice?
2. Are you willing to serve?

1. Do you hear his voice?

It is certainly possible to have someone talk to you and not realize it, or not to listen to what they're saying. Most of us have seen someone we know and we have tried to catch their attention at the store or on the street or at a game some place, and they didn't see us or didn't hear us.

I'll confess that when I'm really concentrating on something, someone can talk to me and I probably won't hear them. It use to drive my parents crazy. Now it drives my wife crazy sometimes.

When God first called to Samuel in the middle of the night, Samuel didn't know who was calling to him. He thought it was his aged mentor, the high priest Eli. He ran to Eli and said to him: **Here I am; you called me.**

The Bible tells us: **Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.** In some ways these have to be among the saddest words of all Holy Scripture. What does it say about sinful mankind, about how far we've fallen away from God and how far we've been separated from God that God should deign to talk to one his creations, and that human being would fail to instinctively recognize the voice of God?

Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden had such a close personal relationship with their Creator that they walked with him and talked with him. But now sinful man doesn't always recognize the voice of God. Millions of the people in the world can't tell the difference between the voice of God and the voice of the devil.

If you knew that God wanted to talk to you, would you make the time to talk to him? If Tuesday night at 8:00 p.m., God said, I want to talk to you for about 10-15 minutes, **Sorry, God, already got plans. Don't have the time, maybe some time when I'm not quite so busy. How about sometime next month?**

Of course, we'd find time for God. Or would we? God doesn't speak to so that we can hear him with our

ears as he did with the young boy Samuel. He talks to us in the pages of his Word. But how often do we have the time to listen? How often do we *make* the time to study, to read, to learn, to apply God's Word to our lives?

We are a civilization, a people, that doesn't have enough time. We're always short on time. But not taking time to listen to God's voice talking to us in his Word is a mistake that we his children dare not and cannot make.

2. Are you willing to serve?

After God called to him a number of times, Samuel with the help of Eli finally figured out that the Lord was calling to him. **'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'**"

When Samuel heard the voice of God calling to him, he not only listened, but he was willing to serve his Lord and do whatever the Lord asked of him. That's the response of faith - the willingness to hear God and the desire to serve God.

That desire comes to God's redeemed children when we realize our sins. When we think of the times we've been deaf when God has talked to us, when we've been too busy, when we've just ignored God or not wanted to do what asks us to do, and to realize that God still loves us and still wants us to be his children, how wonderful and how fabulous that is!

Within our hearts a struggle takes place. Although we should be willing to serve God whole-heartedly, willingly, voluntarily, sometimes we have less than full enthusiasm. Our sinful flesh wrestles with and struggle with our new nature.

If we're given the opportunity and privilege of serving God – in church, at church, or even away from church, do we look at as something we want to do, or as something we wish someone else would do it, so we wouldn't have to? If there's a job to, do we feel relieved if someone else is asked to do it instead of us?

Yet you and I know what filled the heart of Samuel when he answered, **Here I am Lord; you called me.** It was love for his Lord. It was the knowledge that though he was a sinner, God still loved him, and had forgiven him. You and I also know that God loves us. Anytime we wonder if God loves us, the cross of our dear Lord Jesus removes that doubt. God loves us and the whole world so much that he sent Jesus that we and all who believe can have eternal life. And so we answer the Lord's call by joining Samuel, **Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.**

We also realize that our whole entire lives are service to the Lord? When the Lord calls to us, we too answer, **Here I am, Lord; you called me.** Wherever the Lord places us, whatever opportunities God gives us at work, at home – or at church – we gladly with our entire lives serve the Lord.

As we consider God's will for our lives, how to raise our children, our family relationships, our business relationships, God speaks to us in our relationship with him and with the entire world. And no matter what God says, like Samuel we *want* to hear God speak to us, and when God does speak to us in his Word, our response – the only response possible for God's people is like Samuel's – **Speak Lord, for your servant is listening, Amen.**