

3 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 house 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 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. 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."

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours in abundance through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, dear called children of God. "Jon! Come clean your room!" When I used to hear my mom holler this across the house, can you imagine my response? "Uggh! Do I have to do it now?" At this call, I was filled with dread and disappointment because I knew the state of my room. At calls similar to this from a parent to a child, this is a reaction we would expect. We receive a very different call from God. Instead of a call to clean the house or take out the trash, God calls us to listen to his Word. Where taking out the trash is a drag and not something we look forward to, listening to God speak is wonderful. When God calls out in his Word, our reaction is, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." God calls to us, and we listen.

As you heard the first lesson, couldn't you just picture what was going on? The entire thing is vivid. We first get a picture of what the times were like. We first hear that the Word of the LORD was rare. This is explained by the next phrase, "there were not many visions." God's Old Testament people were used to God speaking through his prophets. It was common for God to reveal what he wanted in revelations, visions, and speaking directly with them, like Abraham and Moses. Now, during the time of the Judges, they were not receiving as frequent revelations.

This would be like you used to call and talk to your best friend everyday straight for twenty years. All of a sudden, they didn't answer for several months. This silence would be deafening. It would fill us with doubt and/or worry. "Does my friend not care about me anymore? Is my friend okay? Did they get a new number?" The silence from God would be terrifying. God's people would probably have similar concerns. "Does God remember us? Does he still care for us? Is he going to keep his promises?"

This brings us to the rest of the account. We have young Samuel, maybe about twelve years old, lying down in a portion of the Tabernacle. Everything seems pretty normal. But, out of the silence, God calls out, "Samuel!" Samuel, thinking it was Eli, goes running to Eli for he could need help because of his poor eyesight. "Here I am, you called me." Eli, being bothered by this boy, says, "I didn't call you, go lie down." So that's what he did. As he lies down, the call comes again, "Samuel!" Samuel goes to Eli, "Here I am. You called me." Eli sends Samuel to lie down again. The call comes again a third time. Things proceed in the same way. Each time, the hesitation building for Samuel. This time, Eli realizes it is the Lord calling. Eli gives this instruction. "Say, 'Speak LORD, for your servant is listening.'"

Speak Lord, for your servant is listening. This is the attitude that God expects us to approach his Word with. A servant's attitude. What is a servant's attitude when approaching God's Word? Let God's Word speak for itself. What God led the writers of Scripture to write is what he meant. Yet, at times we let reason interfere. "How can God be Triune? Three persons and yet one God?" "How can God create faith by water splashed on people together with some words?" "Is Jesus' body and blood really there in the Lord's Supper? I can't see it." It's when we let our reason be master over God's Word that we say things that are incorrect and not accurate with Scripture. This leads us to find tempting the false teachings that are reasonable. It's tempting to think, "Jesus body and blood are only represented in the Lord's Supper." These false teachings lead people to be outside of God's family.

And that is why God continues to bring us God's Word. God has made sure his people have always had his Word. First, it began with the prophets during the Old Testament, like Samuel. God spoke to them, and they relayed this message to his people. God conveyed to his people this way about the good news of great joy that a Savior was coming into the world. These prophets were a foreshadowing of the greater prophet to come, Jesus. While Christ was on earth, he not only said everything God wanted him to say, but did everything God wanted him to do. He lived the perfect life that we could never. He kept every single commandment in our place. He died, suffering the punishment that we deserved. And he rose again, demonstrating that he saved us from sin, giving us salvation. Jesus continues serving as that prophet today. Jesus sends out his messengers. First, it was the apostles, who recorded what Christ did for us in the New Testament, as well as proclaimed that message among the early Christian churches. In these days, God sends pastors, teachers, all Christians, with his Word that was recorded in the Bible, to tell us what God wants us to know to be with him in heaven.

Can you picture my mom calling out to me to clean my room? My response was less than enthusiastic. But my mom called me to do something, and I felt required to answer that call. God was calling to Samuel. Eli had to point out to Samuel that it was God calling because God hadn't

called Samuel before. So Eli gives instructions on how to answer God's call. God calls out a fourth time, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel responds, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

In a conversation, there are two sides: the person who speaks, and the person who listens. If you are the person who listens, you should not be the one speaking the most. Good listening includes taking in what the person says and responding at correct times. There is eye contact, certain facial responses, a few prodding questions asked, and summarizing to check for understanding.

Samuel was called on to listen to God. When God called, Samuel responded. Samuel answered God, "Speak, for your servant is listening." This statement is showing to God that God has Samuel's undivided attention. Samuel wasn't a good prophet because he was good at speaking (he could have been). But Samuel was a good prophet because he listened to God.

God calls to us, personally, just like Samuel, in his Word. Our continual prayer is that God grants us a servant's attitude as we listen to God's Word as he calls out to us. This prayer is so important because, by nature, we are bad listeners. We approach God's Word with our own preconceived notions. We have our own opinions and thoughts.

But, God makes us better listeners. He opens up our hearts and minds with the Holy Spirit as we continue to hear God's Word. He opens up the Scriptures to us to see how God has saved us by his Son. And God continues bringing us his Word. He gives so many opportunities for us to hear and learn: like we are in worship, in Bible studies during the week or on Sundays, and in our own personal devotions. We have a great opportunity coming up that we are going to read the whole Bible this year. Have you ever wanted to read the entirety of the Bible, but didn't know where to start? Maybe you were just wishing you had fellow Christians that you could read with? You even can talk to three trained staff who would love to answer your questions. A pastor (or vicar) loves nothing more than when someone asks a question about the Bible. What a great way to ensure that 2021 is going to be a good year. This will begin January 11th. This is a great way to say, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening."

And that is our fervent prayer, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." God continues calling each one of us to listen. Continue to pray for that servant's heart as you hear all the wonderful things God says to us. Amen.