

Called? Me?

I Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20)

Introduction:

- A. Wonderful story—children’s Bibles—picture Bibles—SS—VBS
- B. Thought about calling this sermon, “The Danger of *Falling Asleep* in Church”—there’s a better story for that in the NT—Paul at Ephesus—Eutychus)
- C. Should be “The Danger of *Being* in Church.”
 - 1. Most of the time church is very ordinary, predictable, routine.
 - 2. Sometimes, however, if we’re listening and attentive, God breaks through to us—that makes us uncomfortable.
 - 3. That’s where church gets dangerous.
- D. Samuel’s story is about the call of God. (Gospel of John is too.)
 - 1. Major misconception about the call of God—that it’s just for “professional” ministers—everyone is called.
 - 2. The called charge conference last week was one of the most significant things our church has done in recent memory. Brian heard and answered the call into licensed ministry.
 - 3. Our church had a significant role in Brian’s call. (nurture, confirm the call, affirm Brian, bless him as he goes out from us.)
 - 4. As our DS said, “There will be a part of Eastwood Memorial that will go with Brian wherever he goes in ministry.”
 - 5. There will be many steps along the way where the church will have opportunity to confirm and affirm Brian’s ministry.
 - 6. Share my call story.
- E. On to Samuel. What a funny, biting commentary that God’s voice is so unexpected in the temple. We understand how the place could have become a museum instead of a home for the living God.
- F. Do you come to church expecting to hear God call you? Not the person next to you. Not the choir. Not the preacher. **You!** What is it that distracts or hinders you from hearing God call you? How long has it been since you heard God call you? Have you ever heard God’s call?
- F. Samuel’s story helps us understand God’s call to us.

HOW DOES GOD’S CALL COME TO US?

- A. This begs the question, “Does God still speak to us today?” If God is not speaking, then we will obviously not hear. Or is the issue with our hearing? God is actually speaking to us all the time. The problem is that we aren’t listening.
- B. V. 1 says “the word of God was rare in those days, and visions were infrequent.”

C. Is the Word of God rare today?

1. Samuel could hear, but he wasn't listening—neither was Eli.
2. It's difficult to listen to God these days simply because there is too much noise

D. What are the sounds of life that are impairing our hearing?

1. Avoidance
2. Temptation
3. Guilt, resentment, failure, shame
4. Anger (any destructive emotion)
5. Fear.

E. If God is still speaking today—and he is, how does God speak?

1. Perhaps we've witnessed miracles and direct answers to prayers—these are still possible, but not the norm. Although visions may be rare in the modern world, they can still happen. God only seems to be sleeping. Indeed, while Samuel is sleeping, God turns out to be delightfully awake.
2. God speaks primarily through his written word.
3. God speaks through the inner witness of the Spirit as we open ourselves to listening.
4. God speaks through people (Eli)

F. It is easy to become cynical about the state of the church and suggest that it is unable to hear God's voice when it is spoken, it is important to recognize that the community of faith is still where God chooses to speak. Like Samuel, we are sleeping. We do not fully sense the divinity that is all around us. Exhaustion has so dulled our hearts, minds, and souls that we can work all day in the temple but never hear God.

WHEN DOES GOD CALL?

A. God is always calling—we are not always listening.

B. God called Samuel when he was 12 or 13. "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him."

1. God calls when we know him.
2. God calls when God's word takes root in our heart.

C. In a sense, we are all called in our baptism. (Infant baptism or child dedication is in the tradition of Hannah "lending" Samuel to the Lord, or Jesus being presented in the Temple on the 8th day.)

D. We are certainly called into the "ministry" of God when we profess our faith in Christ. (ie.—membership vows)

E. God can and does call at any stage of life.

WHO DOES GOD CALL?

- A. Samuel was an answer to Hannah's prayer. (Hannah—barren—in that day a woman's worth and identity was tied to child bearing—stigmatized and ostracized by the community—Samuel became who he was because his mother prayed for him and kept her vow to give him to the Lord.)
- B. You've got to marvel at some of the people God calls: Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos.
- C. We get to the NT and you would expect Jesus to have priests, Pharisees, the experts in the law in his inner circle, but instead you find fishermen, laborers, tax collectors, insurrectionists and assorted other sinners.
- D. Throughout the Bible, God does not always choose the expected ones—if anything he chooses the unexpected. Hophni and Phineas, Eli's sons were the heir apparent to Eli's position as priest over Israel. Power and position in the church or community do not guarantee a similar place in God's world.
- E. Young, old, or middle aged; man, woman, or child—God calls us all to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ and faithful servants in the world God gave us.

WHY DOES GOD CALL US?

- A. Sometimes God has a word of judgment. (Story of Eli, Hophni, and Phineas)
- B. Sometimes God calls us to lead a radical transition and transformation of the status quo. God's call often involves working to change human systems that are broken. (Eli was on the way out; Samuel would usher in the kingship)
- C. Sometimes we are to sound the alarm—a word of warning. (7 churches in Revelation; state of the church in the modern world)
- D. We are called to offer a word of hope. (Isaiah—"Comfort my people")—God tells Samuel (v. 11) 'See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle.'—When was the last time you felt a "tingle" about the word of God to you? When was the last time you experienced hope kicking into high gear, forgiveness writ loud, pins and needles all over your body because you were so excited? What this passage recommends to us is that we begin to make decisions based on the tingle of hope!
- E. We are called to offer a word of grace.
- F. We are called to speak up for God no matter what our circumstances are.

WHAT DOES GOD CALL US TO DO?

- A. Matthew 22:36-40--³⁶'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?'
³⁷He said to him, ' "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸This is the greatest and first

commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’

- B. Matthew 28:18-20--¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’*
- C. Micah 6:8--⁸ He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
- D. James 1:27--Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Is God calling you today? Let me restate that—God is calling you today.
- B. Are you listening? Can you hear?
- C. 3 times Samuel thought it was Eli calling. 3 times Eli thought it was the imagination of a precocious child. It’s easy to miss the call of God and attribute it to a human instead.
- D. God calls each of us to represent Christ faithfully in the world through our speech, actions, and attitudes.
- E. God may be calling someone here today into some form of specialized ministry.
(Age is no barrier.)
- F. God’s call comes when we least expect it and often to those we least expect. God is always the God of surprises.
- G. Consider what part of the faith you need to examine more deeply so that you might be open to hearing the voice of God.