

“Speak, Lord, Your Servant Is Listening”—1 Samuel 3:8-10

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Speak, Lord, Your Servant Is Listening”, is 1 Samuel 3:8-10 → *The LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down, and if He calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for Your servant hears.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Do you hear voices which the people around you don't hear? To some extent this is a “loaded question.” Answering this question could place you at risk of being diagnosed with a mental health disorder. The Mental Health Foundation states: “Hearing voices is an auditory hallucination that may or may not be associated with a mental health problem. It is the most common type of hallucination in people with psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia.” Aside from the fears and confusion of hearing voices which others can't hear, being diagnosed as schizophrenic may not help the situation either!

But what if you told someone that God or Jesus was speaking to you? Because it is assumed that “speaking” is auditory, it is probable that most people, both Christians and non-Christians alike, would not understand the concept of hearing the voice of God or Jesus. Throughout the Scriptures we do have account after account of Yahweh speaking, beginning with the creation of the universe in Genesis 1:3 → *And God said, “Let there be light”* and so forth. Yahweh spoke to Adam (cf. Genesis 2:16), Noah (cf. Genesis 6:13), Abraham (cf. Genesis 12:1), Isaac (cf. Genesis 26:2), Rebekah (cf. Genesis 25:23), Moses (cf. Exodus 3:4) and the prophets—to name a few. At times this “speaking” took place through visions (cf. Ezekiel 1:1), dreams (cf. Genesis 28:13), angels (cf. Luke 1:11-13,26-28), or objects such as a burning bush (cf. Exodus 3:2). He even spoke to one man through a donkey! (cf. Numbers 282:28-30).

Our text tells us that Samuel, a boy being raised in the temple of the LORD by the priest Eli, kept hearing a voice while *lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was.* (cf. 1 Samuel 3:3) However, since *the word of the LORD was rare in those days and there was no frequent vision* (cf. 1 Samuel 3:1), he didn’t realize it was the LORD Who was speaking to him. Verse 8 of our text says that when *the LORD called Samuel again the third time . . . he arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.”* Naturally he thought Eli was calling for him. *Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy.*

Eli instructed Samuel what to do if Yahweh called to him again. (Verse 9) When the LORD called the fourth time, Samuel did as Eli instructed and said, *Speak, for Your servant hears.* (Verse 10) By faith he stopped to listen, ready to hear God's Word and obey it! This was purely an act of faith on Samuel's part since it was a very unique experience in his day. However, since it is recorded in the Scriptures, one could easily assume it to be a very common experience in his day but a very strange experience today. **How do you respond when Yahweh speaks to you?**

Even though the Bible records Yahweh's dealings with people over thousands of years one cannot assume that He constantly conversed with people. Even Samuel, being raised by a priest in God's temple *did not . . . know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.* (cf. 1 Samuel 3:7) How could this be? Wouldn't Eli have instructed Samuel in the way of Yahweh, at least based upon the books of the Law in the Bible (i.e. Genesis-Deuteronomy)? Not necessarily. While sacrifices and worship took place at the temple much of it was simply ritualism done in the midst of sin and corruption. Even Eli's sons who served as priests were corrupt. (cf. 1 Samuel 2:12-17)

Just as the devil worked on Adam and Eve to ignore God's word so he is working on you to ignore God's speaking to you as well. He strives to prey on your sinful heart so that you choose to ignore God's speaking

to you in His written Word and carry on with a life of faithlessness, idolatry and disobedience to His will. God's Word is very important in your life because it reveals His special Will toward you and your sin. Unfortunately, many times it is the first thing that is ignored and the last thing looked to for guidance. The prophet Azariah described this situation in God's Old Testament Church in 2 Chronicles 15:3 saying, *For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law. Why? Because they refused in their sin to listen to God's Word, thus separating themselves from His loving presence.*

You have an even greater privilege than Samuel—**you have God's speaking to you in His written Word which you hold in your hands everyday!** Not only does it speak to you of the LORD's dealings with His people in the past but also of His dealings with you today. Romans 15:4 says that *whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, **that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*** It records God's appearing and speaking to people (such as Samuel) in order to accomplish His purpose of dealing with your sin once and for all, by sending His Son to defeat the power of sin, death and the devil in your life!

Thus, the LORD is speaking to you today as well. **Are you listening?** When faced with problems and decisions, do you come to God's Word

saying, “Speak, LORD, Your servant is listening?” It is there that He reassures you of His Lordship and providence in your life as you walk by faith in Him. When confronted with the guilt of your sin, do you come to God’s Word saying, “Speak, LORD, Your servant is listening?” It is there that He speaks the words of forgiveness, absolving your sins as you walk by faith in Jesus and His accomplished work of the cross for you. When confronted with a world which displays hopelessness and despair, do you come to God’s Word saying, “Speak, LORD, Your servant is listening?” It is there you are reassured that Christ’s Lordship is *far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.* (cf. Ephesians 1:21) It is there that you find your hope.

Whether it was speaking to people in the Old Testament or speaking to people in the New Testament, Yahweh’s appearance and speaking served the same purpose: To reveal His will in the unfolding of the plan of salvation through His Son, Jesus, the Christ. This is why Hebrews 1:1-3 says: *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, Whom He appointed the heir of all things, through Whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.*

In these last days it is important for you to read God speaking to you in His written Word; to hear Him speak as other Christians speak His Word to you; to “gladly hear and learn” His Word through preaching in our worship together. After hearing God speak to us in the Scripture readings during worship we respond with, “Thanks be to God.” Why do we say, “Thanks be to God?” Because without the LORD speaking to His people in the past to reveal His desire for us sinners to be saved in the accomplished work of Jesus, we would be lost. **We are thankful for this Word of God speaking to us and giving us forgiveness, new life, guidance and hope today!**

Even what is written about the prophet Samuel gives you an excellent example of how you can come to the Scriptures, seeking God’s will saying, “Speak, LORD, Your servant is listening.” For instance, when Israel asked Samuel to give them a king, 1 Samuel 8:6 says the request *displeased Samuel*. What does God’s Word tell us Samuel did? Go home to “stew and pout” over it? The text says *Samuel prayed to the LORD*. He turned to Yahweh first and foremost!

Sinful human nature hears only what it wants to hear from God instead of listening to all He has to say in His written Word for obedience. Samuel took the LORD’s answer back to the people, explaining to them how disastrous fulfilling such a request would be. Even after hearing what they did not necessarily want to hear they still

insisted he fulfill their request, to which Samuel again responded by going to the LORD in prayer. Both Samuel's displeasure and prayer were based upon God's Word because it revealed that their request was actually rejecting Yahweh as their King in their sinfulness. (cf. 1 Samuel 8:7-9)

Samuel himself becomes an example for us to follow, not just by immediately going to the LORD in prayer, but also by seeking His will as revealed in His written Word. We stop and listen, attentive to the LORD's voice speaking to us in His written Word, **with the desire to obey what He says**. In decision-making your faith response is to find out what the LORD says about the subject **in His written Word, the Bible**, in the midst of hearing the voices of others striving to influence you. As you see God working in every part of your life your faith response is: "Speak, LORD, Your servant is listening!" **with a willingness to obey**. Amen.

Jesus said: *Blessed . . . are those who hear the word of God*
and keep it. (Luke 11:28)

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.