

“Speak, Lord, for Your Servant Is Listening”

Text: 1 Samuel 3:1–21

This morning’s reading from 1 Samuel is a powerful reminder of God’s persistence in seeking us out. He simply doesn’t give up. It’s a story about calling, listening, and obedience, and it challenges us to ask ourselves – are we too truly listening when God speaks?

In this time of Samuel, the people had grown distant from God, and even the sons of Eli – the priest in the temple – were corrupt. Yet in the night, in the stillness of the night, God speaks to Samuel – not to Eli the priest, not to a prophet, but to a child with an open heart.

So often, God’s voice breaks through not in the noise, but in the quiet moments—when we still our hearts and simply wait. In a world filled with notifications, opinions, and constant motion, God still speaks in whispers. And we are reminded by the Psalmist in 46:10 with these words - “Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10)

God’s call to Samuel reminds us that **silence is not God’s absence**. It may be the space where His voice is preparing to be heard.

Three times, God calls Samuel by name. Each time, Samuel thinks it’s Eli. Finally, Eli realizes what is happening and teaches Samuel how to respond:

“Go and lie down, and if He calls you, say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’”

Notice how patient God is—He calls repeatedly, waiting for Samuel to understand. Our God is not distant or demanding; He is **persistent in love**, calling us again and again until we are ready to listen.

God still calls His people today. He calls us to faith, to service, to compassion, to truth. The question is: **Will we recognize His voice?**

Listening for God, living out our calling does not mean that good deeds are necessary to earn salvation, but rather that salvation through faith in Jesus should

result in good works. Good works like helping those in need, loving our neighbor, and demonstrating God's love and grace through our choices and behavior.

When I first read the readings for this morning, just minutes before the text study led by Pastor Kris to help us prepare our message, I could not help but think of Martin Luther's writings on vocation. Martin saw vocation as the place where we live out our faith through our work – our calling.

To be sure, it is in Jesus Christ, Who bore our sins and gives us new life in His resurrection, that **God saves us for eternal life. But in the meantime** He places us in our temporal life where we grow in faith and holiness. In our various callings — as spouse, parent, church member, citizen, and worker — we are to live out our faith. According to Luther's doctrine of vocation, the purpose of every vocation is to love and serve our neighbors.

Martin wrote, "God is milking the cows through the vocation of the milkmaid". This reminds that all honest work is a divine calling and that ordinary tasks, like a milkmaid milking a cow, please God just as much as religious duties like prayer or preaching. Luther's idea was that through our work, God continues to provide for humanity. To serve our neighbors, through our vocation – through our calling.

From Matthew we are reminded of two callings. Jesus is teaching through parables, when a Pharisee, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" ³⁷

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'^[a] ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'^[b] ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

We love God by our faith, by our love for the Lord our God, for he sent his Son, Jesus, who died on the cross for our sins, so that we may be resurrected and saved for eternal life. But in the meantime – it is clear that we should love your neighbor as yourself.

So who is my neighbor?

It helps to consider the question that the lawyer asked Jesus in Luke, “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). Jesus answered him with the parable of the good Samaritan. It is here we are called to love and serve our friends, our enemies, the people next door, strangers, someone bleeding by the side of the road. Our neighbor is those we encounter in our daily living, who are in need of love and serve, not just those we feel comfortable with, those that we know, but those who we may only meet once, for a few minutes, who are in need.

I recently heard a story about a woman whose vehicle was stuck at the end of her drive. She was out shoveling snow to clear her vehicle but the snow plows coming by kept pushing wet, slushy snow back on her drive and it seemed as if she would never get her car cleared. However, another woman stops by, gets her shovel out of the trunk, and helps woman clear the drive in about 5 minutes. When thanking the woman for stopping, the woman replied, “We all have five minutes to give.”

My father passed away in December 2009. The night before his funeral we experienced a wet heavy snow. As the hearse approached the cemetery, there was a ridge of snow across the driveway and the hearse got stuck! The pallbearers following in the limo started piling out to push the hearse through the snow, when a lawn service truck out doing snow removal saw what was happening, dropped their blade and cleared the ridge of snow so the hearse could get through. “We all have five minutes to give.”

Here in this community of Christ we called to love and serve one another. The ordinary tasks of a congregation — setting up chairs, passing out bulletins, serving on committees, teaching Sunday school, chatting in the narthex before service or on the sidewalk after service, are the very way we express our love for each other. Indeed, it is an expression of the communion of saints.

As we gather in worship today, let Samuel’s story challenge and comfort us. Perhaps you feel like you haven’t heard from God in a long time. Maybe His word feels “rare” in your life. But the same God who called Samuel still calls today—through His Word, through His Spirit, through the quiet prompting in your heart.

Our prayer can be simple, yet life-changing. It is what Eli taught Samuel to say:

“Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.”

Let’s be people who not only talk to God, but who **make space to hear Him**—in prayer, in Scripture, in the silence between the songs.

God’s call to Samuel was the beginning of something new in Israel—a renewal of His word among His people. It can be that for us, too. When God speaks and we listen, **His presence is renewed**, His purpose becomes clear, and His kingdom advances.

I was moved by these words from Gene Veith who writes on Martin Luther and Vocation. It was a reminder of where we experience God and where we meet Christ. He wrote these words at the end of an article I relied on to prepare this message:

God is hidden in vocation. Christ is hidden in our neighbors.

And I am reminded that at the end of worship, we are called with the words - **Go in Peace to Serve God and Your Neighbor.**

Amen.