

Series: Back to School
Sermon: Here I Am!

I Samuel 3:1-21

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."

11 And the Lord said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. 12 At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. 13 For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them. 14 Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'"

15 Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the Lord. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, 16 but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son."

Samuel answered, "Here I am."

17 "What was it he said to you?" Eli asked. "Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you." 18 So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, "He is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes."

19 The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. 20 And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. 21 The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

Sermon

Two guys talking to each other. One guy says to the other, “My wife talks to herself a lot.” His friend answered, “Mine does, too, but she doesn’t know it. She thinks I’m listening.” You drive by the junior or senior high, and this is what you see: (PIC OF KIDS ON GADGETS). Social media keeping us from being social. Not just to pick on kids, but its on us adults as well - here’s a family Christmas photo from last year (PIC OF CHRISTMAS PHOTO). People talking without speaking, people hearing without listening. Why doesn’t God speak to us anymore? Maybe he does, and we just don’t listen. One of my quotable lines from the New Testament is from Jesus, when he tells a good point, “Those who have ears, let them hear.” In other words, that was good stuff, don’t let it go in one ear and out the other. I even do that with my kids. Take your dishes to the sink. Those who have ears, let them hear. Not to the same effect, but I try. We also quote Ramesses from the Ten Commandment movie: Can you vacuum the living room? “So it shall be written, so shall it be done.” Sounds more serious like that!

As we continue our look at Samuel, we see how God called him to something special. God is asking us to listen! But are we? Hopefully, this morning, we are. And I see four checkpoints to glean from our passage this morning. So, if we are to listen to God, the first checkpoint that we see is that God is calling us. God is calling us, much like He was calling Samuel. Samuel was serving the Lord, and the Bible says that the word of the Lord was rare in those days. We could say that it is rarer even yet today. The word of the Lord was rare, it wasn’t prevalent. Samuel is called by the Lord in the midst of a spiritual drought. God was not communicating to His people, but not because He didn’t have anything to say. If you look back at the previous chapter, it’s because His people had turned away from Him. And Samuel is called, and, God overlooked the likely candidate. Samuel’s about twelve or thirteen years old, at this moment in his life, and he’s ministering with Eli. And God doesn’t call Eli, the high priest. He calls Samuel, the boy. So, Samuel is in this unique setting, in a culture that isn’t pursuing God—in a culture that’s forgotten what God has commanded them—and He comes and He calls Samuel. We see some unique, specific characteristics between Samuel and Eli in verses 2 and 3: “At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. 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.” Eli: Unholy. Blindness setting in. Bad kids. Distant from God. Samuel: Holy. Full of life. Has sight. Close to God: IE: laying down by the ark - he’s in the room where it happened - not Like Eli. The stage is set with metaphor. The lamp of God had not yet gone out - meaning it is getting dimmer with Eli’s lack of ministry. God continues to call to us - but we’ve moved away. This morning, I would venture to say that there are probably some of us here who have endured moments—and months and months—of anguish and pain: you’ve lost a spouse, you’ve lost a child, your wife or your husband has told you they wanted a divorce, you failed a class, you failed an exam. You have experienced excruciating pain. And in that moment—hear me when I say it—God is calling you to closeness with Him, not distance. I remember a family that went through tragedy, and in that moment, they thought the smart and wise thing to do was to withdraw from community – back away from others, regroup, cry in private, but retreat into themselves. But in looking back, they said in the midst of all that pain and anguish, their lives would have been so much richer, so much better, to lean into community rather than withdraw. Friends, family, school, work, church, relationships. The Lord is calling you to a closeness with Him. Calling you from darkness to light, from despair to hope. From inward pain to outward joy.

The next checkpoint in our story comes out of that calling, and goes into Commissioning. Commissioning. Big fancy church word. Three times the Lord called out to Samuel, and finally Eli gets the hint that Samuel hears something that he cannot. Samuel’s response to God is—before he even knows what God is going to ask him—“Speak, Lord, for your servant hears. And I’m hearing to obey. I’m not hearing just to hear.” One version of scripture puts it like this: “Then the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I

swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.” Let's just pause and feel the weight of what was just told to Samuel. Samuel's about thirteen or fourteen at this point; Eli's super-old (that's biblical for really, really, really old). He's been serving under Eli for years. And God comes, and Samuel's response is, “Speak, for your servant hears. I hear as to obey.” And God lays on him the weight of telling Eli that his time as priest is over. And his kids won't inherit the priestly job. More on them next week. When we look at commissioning, the word “commissioning” is rooted in a Latin word, “committere” which means “to entrust.” Like Committee. So Samuel is commissioned—or entrusted—with communicating a compelling message that God had given him. God is commissioning—entrusting—us with a message, and the question you should be asking is, “What is God entrusting me with? I've responded to God's call. I've gone from death to life. I've put my faith in Jesus. What is He commissioning me with? What has He given me?” I would say, as believers in Jesus Christ, we've been commissioned with specific messages. The first message with which we've been commissioned is the good news of salvation—for the world to hear. If you look at Romans chapter 10:15, Paul makes an amazing statement: He says, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” God, have you seen my feet? Ask my wife about my toenails. My feet are ugly! Hobbit feet. They are not pretty at all...until I carry the good news of the gospel! God has entrusted you, and He's entrusted me, to be His mouthpieces for a world that needs His good news. He's entrusted us with that message, He's commissioned us with that message.

The third checkpoint we see is that of confrontation. Samuel got the message early in the night, but the Bible says that he waiting till morning. Good call, considering the message. I would be scared-out-of-my-mind to tell somebody, “Hey, God's going to bring judgment on your family, and there's nothing you can do about it! Nah nah nah nah nah nah.” I would be petrified! And Samuel is, too. Samuel is afraid. He's hesitant to tell Eli the compelling message that God has given him. And the only time we see Eli do something good is when he says, “Hey! Tell me, or may God do it to you!” And Samuel shares. The compelling message with which we've been commissioned can lead to confrontation. It can lead to confrontation with friends—at work or at school. It can lead to confrontation with family. Why? Because light looks different than dark; because sin is comfortable and holiness is hard. Because a closeness to God reflects something different upon you. So, it can bring confrontation. It can bring confrontation at work—and can will bring confrontation within your own heart. I catch this in my pastoral office every now and then. Spouses who want to share with their loved one something, but not sure how to do it. Parents that want to confront their kids, or kids that want to confront their parents. I don't want to live like this anymore. I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired. You have to change, or I have to change in enabling this. Samuel responded well to the confrontation. He just kind of lets Eli know, “Hey, this is what's happening.” And Eli responds beautifully: “Let the Lord do it—because if it's the Lord, there's nothing I can do to stop it.” I think Eli knew that the future they were riding wasn't on the right bus, spiritually speaking. His kids weren't following in the right path. There was no future in the way they were going.

The last checkpoint that we see, in hearing God speak is that of commitment. Look at the latter part of 1 Samuel chapter 3, verses 19-21: “And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.” Samuel's commitment to fulfill the call and commissioning—and working through confrontation—led to Samuel being synonymously associated with the Lord. The word of the Lord was no longer rare. It was prevalent. Samuel grew, the Lord was with him. He let none of his words fall to the ground: that is a picture of fulfilling the calling God has given to us. Are we committed? Are we hearing what God is saying? Are we understanding what He's entrusted us with? And are we presenting it in a compelling way, so that people know that something is different? The reason the whole nation knew who Samuel was (this was before social media, mind you—he had no Twitter following), was that God was making Himself known. That's why they knew. This morning, as we look at the different checkpoints of hearing God speak, chances are we're somewhere on this diagram. If you're here this morning, and the word of the Lord has been rare to you—you've never heard the gospel—God's calling you! He's calling you to repent of your sins, place your faith and trust in Christ alone

because He alone is sufficient for your salvation. If you've responded to God before—and you're a follower of Christ—there's a high likelihood that you're in one of these four checkpoints. Do you understand what God's commissioned you with? You and I are God's plan for the world! How are we doing at it? How are we working through confrontation? How committed are we to what He's given us? How is your hearing? Are we listening?

This morning, let me challenge you to reflect on what God is doing. Has His Word been rare in your heart and in your life? Do you respond to the Lord by laying your anxieties, your burdens, your cares on Him at the altar, renewing your sense of commission? Here I am! Do we confront your problems head on? Do you praise the Lord because you've been committed to the work He's given you? Those who have ears, let them hear. Or if you prefer, So it shall be written, so shall it be done. And the family of God said, Amen!