

## 1 Samuel 3:1-10

When the LORD spoke to His prophets in Old Testament times, His prophets didn't always **like** what He had to say. Quite often their prophecies included impending **doom** and **destruction** - not the kind of message which you really want to **pass on** - **especially** to your **friends**. But at the same time, the LORD's prophets also knew that these messages from the LORD were 100% **true**, and therefore, they always **listened** when He spoke to them. That's the situation which we have here in our text today, except for one thing - Samuel had never **heard** the LORD **speak** to him before, so he wasn't exactly sure what to **do** or what to **say**. The words of **Eli** the priest offered the **perfect** solution, and they also serve as the **theme** for today's sermon: "*Speak, LORD, Your Servant Is Listening.*" In our text, Samuel was about to learn that when God **speaks**, He speaks **clearly** - He speaks to **whomever** He wants - and He **continues** to speak until His **will** is **done**.

As we begin, it's important that we recognize what the **political** climate was like during the days of Samuel. The time of the **judges** was one in which everybody did **as they pleased**. Anarchy and lawlessness were the **rule**, while striving to follow the commandments of the **LORD** was the rare **exception**. The time of the judges was rapidly drawing to a **close**, for **Samuel** was to be the **last** of the judges. He would personally anoint **Saul** to be the first **King** of Israel, thus ushering in a **new era** in Israel's history - a **Golden Age** for Israel's **political influence**, as well as a time when they would greatly expand their **boundaries**.

It is even **more** important to remember what the **religious** climate was like during the time of the judges. It was a far cry from even coming **close** to being **good**. Our text says, "*In those days the word of the LORD was rare. There were not many visions.*" In those days, the people didn't **care** much about God's Word. There had been **some** prophets, but they had been few and far between - and even though they were **around**, nobody was interested in **going** to them to ask for God's **advice** and **guidance**. The people were far **more** concerned about eating, and drinking, and being **comfortable**, than they were about caring for their immortal **souls**. As cruel as it may sound, maybe they needed to go to **war**! It seems, at least in our **own** country, that whenever a **war** breaks out, people become far more interested both in **God**, as well as in the things He has to **say**.

During the time of the judges, the LORD was certainly **displeased** with the

impiety, and impurity, and corruption of the people. His actions **showed** His displeasure. In the Book of Proverbs God tells us, *“Since you **rejected** Me when I called and no one gave **heed** when I stretched out My hand, since you **ignored** all My advice and would not **accept** My rebuke, I in turn will **laugh** at your disaster. I will **mock** when calamity overtakes you.”* The people didn’t **want** God’s Word, so gradually, He **removed** it from their midst, until it became **extremely rare**.

That is certainly a sad commentary on the lives of God’s people - and it is a situation which **we** will want to **avoid** at **all** costs. Losing God’s Word would mean losing one of the Means of **Grace**. When we **have** them all, and **use** them all, that’s the best possible scenario. Those are the times when our **faith** will naturally be the **healthiest** and the **strongest**. But God doesn’t **force** people to be spiritually strong and healthy. And unfortunately, sometimes we **ourselves** foolishly allow the Word of the LORD to become **rare** among us. Under those circumstances, the best thing we can do is to continue to encourage people to make use of **whatever** Means of Grace **are** available, lest the LORD should choose to make them **all** rare in our midst. For example, if people are choosing not to regularly hear God’s **Word**, then let us encourage them to receive His **body and blood** often in the Lord’s Supper. If they are choosing not to receive the Lord’s Supper often, let us encourage them to read and study their **Bibles** at home. And if they are choosing to do **neither** of **those**, then we pray that they would at least keep their **Baptism** in mind, and continue to make use of the blessings which the Holy Spirit brings through **that** Sacrament. The LORD speaks **clearly** at all times, but we make it increasingly more **difficult** for Him to get His message **across** to us, when we make His Word and Sacraments **rare** among us.

Note also that the LORD speaks **to whomever** He wants. In our text, Samuel is described as being a **boy** - only a **child**. Why would God want to speak to **him**? If He wanted to bring about **religious** reforms, why didn’t God speak to **Eli** instead? After all, Eli was the **priest**, and it would logically seem that **he** would have had a much greater **influence** among the people. However, the LORD’s logic is not always the **same** as ours. His choice of **Samuel** was a **marvelous** choice - not so much because Samuel was a **child**, but because he was **faithful**. Samuel was the kind of child any parent would be **proud** of because of his **obedience**. What a **contrast** in comparison to Hophni and Phineas, the two **rebellious** sons of Eli. Since Samuel was only a **child**, perhaps his **responsibilities** were **also** small, but nevertheless, he carried them out to the best of his **ability**. Our text mentions that Eli was almost completely **blind**. So, it is very possible that

one of the duties of Samuel was to help Eli find his way around the **temple**, and to run **errands** for him. Perhaps that doesn't sound like a very **important** job, and maybe it **wasn't** - but God says that the person who is **faithful** in a **little**, will also later be entrusted with **much** - and that was certainly **true** in Samuel's life.

I know there are many times when **we** feel that we aren't really doing very **much** for the LORD. We feel like His work could go on very nicely without any help from **us** at all. Maybe we only serve the LORD by coming to **worship** Him. Maybe our gift is **singing** or playing an musical **instrument** - or **both**. Maybe we do a little **planning** and **organizing** for the LORD, or perhaps it's some **painting** and **cleaning**. Perhaps we have the ability to serve God by giving our assistance for **special** and **unique** projects which come up now and then. But **whatever** it might be, we can be sure that when the LORD calls us to **do** something - **anything** for Him - it is well **worth** doing, and it is worth doing **well**. The LORD recognizes our willingness to be of **service** to Him, and He also knows our **talents** even better than we know them ourselves. After all, He's the one who **gave** them to us in the **first** place. Serve the LORD **faithfully**, and He will see to it that your faithfulness is both **utilized** and **rewarded**.

The LORD doesn't allow His Word to go **unheeded**. Did you notice how **persistent** the LORD was in our text? Even though Samuel didn't know what was going on, the LORD called to him 3 different times - and the **4th** time He actually came and **stood**, so that Samuel could **see** who was calling him. At first we might wonder why it took Samuel so **long** to figure out that it was the **LORD** who was speaking to him. But we must remember that the voice of God was a totally **new** experience for Samuel. He had probably read some of God's **written** Word, but visions like **this** one were **rare**. So, Samuel's reaction to a **voice** in the middle of the night was really quite **normal**. When he heard his name called, he went to see what it was that **Eli** needed. It is a **credit** to Samuel's character, that he showed no signs of **disrespect** toward Eli, even after Samuel had to get out of his nice warm bed for seemingly **no reason** on **three** separate occasions. **My** patience would probably be pretty **thin** if someone kept waking **me** up in the middle of the night, only to tell me to go back to **sleep** again!

Eli **also** showed some positive traits here. First of all, he was **perceptive** enough to recognize that someone really **was** calling Samuel. And secondly, he reasoned that it must be the **LORD**. That realization must have been a rather **humbling** experience for Eli - for although **he** was the priest, God had passed him

by, and had given His message to a **child** instead. Nevertheless, Eli did **not** react with **jealousy**. Instead, he **instructed** Samuel as to how he should **answer**, the **next** time the LORD called to him.

The LORD was very **persistent**. He called four times, and made use of two individuals to see to it that His will was done. Those efforts of the LORD bore **fruit**, as **all** of His efforts do. When Samuel answered he said, “*Speak, For Your Servant Is Listening.*” This was only the **first** time that the LORD spoke to Samuel. The life which lay ahead for him was full of bold and exciting adventures. There would be many **other** messages from the LORD, concerning many different things, but for the time being, Samuel **knew** the voice of the LORD - and from then on, he **listened**.

To whose voice do **you** listen? There are **many** from which to choose. The voices of materialism, work righteousness, selfishness, and free and wild living all **shout** at us daily. They have **much** to say to us. They say, “Follow **me**, and your life will be rewarding, satisfying, and lots of **fun**. Come on, it’s **easy**.” But the **LORD** has much to say to us daily **too** - if we only learn to **recognize** His voice in His **Word**. God has much for **each** of us to **do**. But, the life which lies ahead for **us** is **not** always a bold and exciting adventure. It’s **not** always easy, or rewarding, or satisfying, or lots of fun. Yet, **whatever** the LORD asks of us - whatever He calls upon us to **endure** - we can be sure that it is **worthwhile**, and that it will accomplish **His** purposes. May we, as God’s servants, **respond** to the LORD’s voice in child-like **faith**, as **Samuel** did by saying, “*Speak, LORD, Your Servant Is Listening.*” Amen.