

1 Samuel 3:1-10
Called
January 14th, 2018

Today I want to start out with a word of encouragement and comfort. But before forgiveness, must come, confession. So, how many of you have ever fallen asleep in worship? Raise your hand.



That's good! Confession is good for your soul! And yes, this includes me.

One pastor pointed out that today's scripture is an example of God speaking to someone while **sleeping in the Sanctuary**. For some, as I've observed, this should be very encouraging!

God calls to us whether we are awake or asleep; whether we know his voice or not, whether we are an innocent child like Samuel, or an old corrupt priest like Eli, or a 75 year old, such as Abram. God speaks to us. God calls us whatever our age.

Our scripture begins, **"Now the boy, Samuel, was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days, visions were not widespread."**

When God spoke to Samuel it was one of those bad times in the life of Israel. Worship at the tent of meeting that Eli and his sons watched over had been corrupted by Eli's sons. Eli's sons were stealing the offerings, sexually abusing the worshipers, and Eli did nothing. Politically there was chaos in Israel with no King, or Judge to lead them.

Israel's enemies threatened, and even God spoke rarely, and visions were small in number. This even though there was a rich spirituality, but that spirituality was turned towards idols and false gods, and **"everyone did whatever they wanted"**, which is the Biblical definition of **societal sin**. It was chaos.

Things were a mess and God spoke, God called a 12 year old boy to be his prophet!



Not many young people here today. In fact “young” in this congregation is often defined as being under the age of 60. But I know some young people stayed for this message so; young people, think of this, there was a seasoned old priest right there at God’s house and who did God choose to speak to, to call? God called a boy! A young boy! And God calls you!

Now one of the fascinating plays of words and images in this scripture is the play on light and darkness, vision and growing blindness.



Eli and his sons had grown corrupt. Their spiritual vision and leadership had dimmed. Eli, who was going blind, slept in the darkness away from the Ark of the Covenant, a source of God’s illumination and inspiration.

But Samuel slept in the temple sanctuary in the light of **“The Lamp of God that had not yet gone out.”**



The lamp was allowed to go out at the breaking of the dawn; so since it was still lit we know it was late at night. It was very dark, not only for Eli and Samuel, but for the nation of Israel because, **“they did whatever they wanted to do.”**

It was very dark and yet the Lamp of God had not gone out. Out of the darkness, light shined and God said, **“Samuel, Samuel.”**

Samuel did not yet know the Lord and the Lord's voice. Samuel served him anyway.

And since Samuel did not know the Lord's voice he got up and ran to Eli saying, "Here I am."

Often when we hear God calling we can mistake God's voice for another's. This is what Samuel did. Three times God called Samuel and three times he said, "Here I am."

It was only after the 3rd time that Eli, old, blind, corrupt Eli, understood that it was God calling Samuel.

When Eli perceived that, he told Samuel to reply when God called again, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Which Samuel did.

Now what can we take from this? First, I will address the older people gathered here. My friends, the young people in your life need you. They desperately need you to point them in the direction of Jesus.

Our society has changed. In our lifetimes we can remember when our society as a whole if not pushing our young people towards faith, then at least held a positive view of faith and religion. This is not the case today. Our society in many ways has turned its back on faith in blatant and subtle ways.

Tomorrow is Rev. Martin Luther King Day. You might note that it is referred to often as Martin Luther King Day, or Civil Rights day or MLK day but the "Rev." is missing. What is tragic is that most young people do not know that civil rights as well as the end to slavery was driving by Christians and the Christian faith.

Christians inspired by the freedom they found in Jesus, Christians inspired by Jesus who was sent to set the prisoner free, Christians who were inspired by the powerful verse 2 Cor. 3:17 "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom."

Anyway, today if a young person is to hear of Christ they need to hear it from you.

Since the 2nd chapter of Acts, the Spirit of God has been poured out on all flesh. God is calling all people to him, and the young people in your life need the wisdom of your direction in order to sort out the Lord's voice among all the negative, confusing voices they hear in this world.

Now I know what some are thinking. **I'm too old to relate to children and youth. I'm not worthy to speak about God to children and youth. I won't know what to say.**

Well, here's the answer to those three objections. **First, Abram was 75 years old when God called him.** Abram was just warming up to serving God at the age of 75!

Vista Church is a living testament that you can answer God's call to serve at any age. Just look at our missions program that touches the lives of 100s if not 1000s every year with the love of God! It is not run by Young Adults.

Second, you think you don't know what to say? That's good. Start a conversation and then listen. Until you listen long and hard and love them deeply, you won't know what to say. I don't know what to say to children and youth until I listen long and hard and love them. And I worked with children and youth fulltime for 24 years.

Listen long and hard and love them deeply and you'll earn the right to be heard, and you'll know what to say. I know some young people are rejecting the faith, and you as Grandma or Grandpa are the only ones who can listen, and help them hear the word of God, the call of God.

Third, you may feel you're not worthy enough. You may feel your life is somehow stained and that would prevent you from being used by God to help another hear God's voice. That's absolutely not true. We are all sinners in need of a Savior!!

When I was about 16 or 17, a Youth Pastor out of the blue told me, “Fred, you ought to become a pastor.” That caught me completely off guard. I had thought of a hundred other things I thought I could do with my life, but not being a pastor.

I didn’t see that pastor for a year and I ran into him in the little grass courtyard at Catalina UMC. The first words out of his mouth were not a “hello”, but “Fred, have you thought more about being a pastor?” I was stunned, but the word stuck. This pastor shortly thereafter descended into alcoholism and divorce and left the ministry, but his word to me from God was true. Corrupt old Eli’s word to Samuel was true.

You are not too old. You will know what to say when you listen and you are worthy to speak what you know of God!

Samuel’s example shows us, we older people, need to speak to the younger and help them sort out and hear the word of God for their lives. God’s got a calling and purpose for each one of us whatever our age. We need to hear God’s voice and follow to serve.

Now young people, listen up, now’s not the time for sleeping and searching for a vision. Now’s the time for a word for you!

Do you feel a dissatisfaction with your faith, with the church? Maybe even feel, or think like you don’t believe in God?

Or do you feel lost, and the inevitable question older people always seem to ask, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” drives you crazy?

Well, these times of dissatisfaction, turmoil and lostness. That inner feeling of emptiness and even anger are opportunities for God to speak to you, to call you.

It’s in the struggle or fight that we often find God. Jacob struggled with an angel and in the end found God.

I'll give you an example from my life. Now you know God called me to be a pastor. Many people think God only calls pastors and everyone else just gets to figure it out on their own. No, I have two brothers who are Electronic Engineers. One designs heart pace makers, and one works on electronic devices used to discover oil, gas, gold, copper and even geo-thermal energy sources. They both know God called them to their work. God calls everyone to their vocation.

It's not easy finding our calling and when it's to serve, we often struggle hardest.

I tried Civil Engineering, Architecture, Biblical Archeology, Young Adult Leader and finally being a traveling Evangelist before I understood God called me to be a stationary Youth Pastor and then a pastor.

It wasn't simply a broken pastor that told me twice I ought to be a pastor and I did it. God called me many more times than just the three times he called Samuel before he responded, and for me, for me, God spoke most clearly through wiser, older, grayer, balder heads to guide me to where I am today.

Young people don't be afraid or vastly concerned if you haven't got your life figured out at the age of 12, 16, 17 or 18. As a teenager once pointed out to me "the reason so many adults ask, 'what are you going to be when you grow up?,' is that they are looking for a few good ideas."

Enjoy the search. If you've loved hide and seek, you'll love life with God for it's the journey with God that matters. It's answering, "yes", to the call and following that matters.

Samuel said, when he finally understood that it was God speaking, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

God calls all of us to serve no matter what we do for a living, a vocation.

All of us whatever our age, be we children, youth, adults, or old people, God calls us to serve and we can even if it's just a kind word, a listening ear, a cup of cold water.

God calls us to listen and to serve. This Samuel did. He heard God's call and he answered and served. Eli knew God's voice and call, but he refused to serve, and you can see this if you read the whole story in 1 Samuel, chapters 2-4.

But today I'm giving everyone an opportunity to hear God's call to serve and respond.

Young People - I believe God has called some of you to fulltime ordained ministry. God has called some of you to be Pastors, or Youth Pastors, or Christian Educators, or church musicians.

If you think I'm crazy, or your stomach just tied in a knot, it's not me calling you, it's GOD.

Now you adults God has called some of you to be Lay Servants, Speakers and Ministers. God has called some of you to be Stephen Ministers.

And I believe God is calling some to be involved in the following ministries within Vista Church.

1st, we need 2 couples or four singles, any combination of 4 to form an Altar Guild group.

2nd, we need people skilled in photography/video to work in producing slides and videos for worship and our Live Streaming ministry.

3rd, we need people to help with our Satellite Fellowship mission. On February 11th we will meet to eat lunch and find out more.

4th, for our building campaign we need people to say "Yes" when contacted to be on the financial campaign for this. Sunday January 28th we will have a great reveal of the plans.

To some this is your call to believe in Jesus Christ. To follow God only as revealed in Jesus Christ the word become flesh.

God has called you to serve!

So I'm going to give everyone an opportunity to respond.

If you feel God has called you to any of these things and even in other ways I've not even spoken of, let this be your time to respond to serve.

During our time of offering and closing hymn I'm asking you to write down what you will commit to. My suggestions are on the screen.

- 1st, Altar Guild
- 2nd, Photography and videography
- 3rd, Satellite Fellowship Luncheon
- 4th, Financial campaign committee.

And any young people who are feeling called to a vocation in ministry and would like to explore that call speak to me or to Valerie and if it is God calling, you are about to enter the most challenging adventure of your life.

Indeed, what is God saying to you and what are you going to do?