

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Third Sunday after Epiphany, January 27, 2019**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 296, 295:1-2, 294, 291, 283.

Lessons: 1 Samuel 1:1-20, 2 Corinthians 4:1-18, Luke 10:1-16.

Sermon Text: 1 Samuel 3:1-10.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Do we really listen when someone is talking to us? One temptation is to not pay attention. Another temptation is to be thinking about what we're going to say. Another temptation is to be day-dreaming. Another temptation is to think we've heard it before. But we'd have to admit that we don't always listen the way we should.

As we review the history of the Lord's beginning to talk to Samuel, we must ask ourselves: do we really listen when the Lord is talking to us? Do we, from the heart, say

**“SPEAK, O LORD, THY SERVANT HEARETH”**

1. **How did these words apply to Samuel?**
2. **How do these words apply to us?**

Samuel's parents, Elkanah and Hannah, very much wanted a child. His mother had been the second wife and she had no children, but prayed ***“O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.”*** 1 Samuel 1:11 (NIV) ***“So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, ‘Because I asked the LORD for him.’”*** 1 Samuel 1:20 (NIV) His name means “asked of God”.

***“After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with [offerings and a sacrifice] to Eli, and she said to him, ‘As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.’”*** 1 Samuel 1:24-28 (NIV)

Samuel then ministered, learned and served the Lord under the priest Eli. Eli was an old man who did not serve the Lord in God-pleasing ways and permitted his two sons Hophni and Phinehas, who were also priests, to live especially wicked lives. Scripture tells us that they would steal from the meat sacrifices and publicly commit adultery. In war against the Philistines, they superstitiously brought the ark of the covenant to the battlefield, thinking that would somehow save Israel in the battle, but the Philistines captured the ark and killed Eli's sons. When Eli heard of this, he ***“fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man and heavy. He had led Israel forty years.”*** 1 Samuel 4:18 (NIV)

But today we want to talk especially about Samuel. This was a time when the Word of God was “rare” or “precious”. ***“There were not many visions.”*** It rarely happened that the Lord sent a message by direct prophetic announcement and thus there was no vision from God to teach about. Although the five books of Moses were kept in the tabernacle, even the priests neglected them. Not since the death of Moses had there been a great prophet in Israel. And because the religious leaders neglected the Word of God, the people did not appreciate God's words. Although Moses had said by inspiration of God that ***“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him”*** Deuteronomy 18:15 (NIV) the people were not willing to listen to anyone speaking God's Words.

Scripture also says that ***“Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.”*** Remember that God’s people at this time did not have all the written scriptures of the Old Testament as we have them now. God spoke directly to the prophets and priests in words and visions. Samuel heard a voice while he was sleeping ***“in the temple of the LORD, [that is, the tabernacle, for Solomon’s temple had not yet been built,] where the ark of God was.”*** At first, Samuel didn’t recognize that the Lord was talking to him but he went to Eli, thinking that Eli was calling him. This happened twice, and the third time, Eli recognized that the Lord was speaking directly to Samuel and told him how to answer. ***“Eli told Samuel, ‘Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’”***

Samuel did not yet possess the special, direct knowledge of God. At this time in history God’s message was given only by an extraordinary revelation of the Lord, in dreams and in visions. On this night the Lord spoke directly to him. When he realized this was God talking to him, he said ***“Speak, for your servant is listening.”*** ***“Speak; for thy servant heareth.”*** (KJV) Samuel gave his full attention to what God was telling him. As you read Scripture, you realize this happened more than once in Samuel’s life.

What God told him this first time was bad news for Eli, which Eli had previously heard from the Lord God. ***“The LORD said to Samuel: ‘See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.’”*** 1 Samuel 3:11-14 (NIV) Ears tingling gives us the picture of people buzzing and talking about it, as if every word is filled with meaning. For example, when the ark of the covenant was captured, surely all Israel was talking about it.

Scripture tells us that ***“Samuel continued as judge over Israel all the days of his life”*** 1 Samuel 7:15 (NIV) and that God spoke to Samuel many times during his life, and Samuel then spoke to the people.

***“The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD. The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word. And Samuel’s word came to all Israel.”*** 1 Samuel 3:19-4:1 (NIV) The picture of not letting any words of God fall to the ground shows great respect for God’s words.

***“When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges for Israel. The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.”*** 1 Samuel 8:1-3 (NIV)

Partly because Samuel’s sons were wicked and also because God’s people wanted to be like the pagan nations around them, the people asked for a king. The Lord spoke to Samuel and he told the people that a king would not be good for them. But the people insisted. The Lord finally gave them what they wanted, and it turned out that Saul was their first king. Although God permitted Saul to rule them as a king, Saul eventually turned against God and the people suffered.

Today in Samuel at this young age we find an example of what we read in the letter to the Hebrew Christians: ***“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.”*** Hebrews 1:1-2 (NIV) Jesus, the Savior, has come, and we have the entire Bible for our hearing and learning. Jesus is quoted literally in the Gospels and really speaks to us in all of “the Word”, for Jesus is the Word of God. (John 1:1)

Samuel is not only an example of obedience, but also of willingness to hear the voice of the Lord. Like him all believers should open their ears and hearts to God and give heed to the voice which comes to us in God’s Word. Jesus plainly states that at the end of Matthew’s Gospel when he commands his followers to go and teach and baptize people ***“teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”*** Matthew 28:20 (NIV)

Is this really done today?

I want to ask you two questions yet this morning. First: How do we guide and direct our children? By this I mean do we – and you parents – encourage them to consider a life of service to the Lord, especially serving in the church as Hannah did for her son Samuel? How do we talk about and react to what leaders in the church, especially ministers and teachers tell us and how they live? Do we recognize the Word of God that our spiritual leaders feed us as a message that must be listened to and heard, especially with our hearts?

And the second question is: Do we always recognize that the Lord is talking to us? We find so many other voices talking to us. And especially, we find so many offering spiritual or religious ideas that are in conflict with the clear, plain Word of God. We must carefully “try the spirits” and evaluate everything we hear and read – especially “spiritual ideas” to see if they are totally in agreement with the Word of God.

God talks to us through his Word as it has been written and as it is preached and taught. Remember that ***“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”*** 2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV) And that ***“holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”*** 2 Peter 1:21 (KJV)

You have called your pastor to proclaim the Word of God in all its truth and purity to you. You have the responsibility to evaluate what he says in the light of the Scriptures – only in the light of the Bible. If he speaks or writes something not in agreement with the pure Word of God, you are to admonish him, talking to him first of all. ***“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.”*** Matthew 18:15 (NIV) You are to ***“Search the scriptures”*** John 5:39 (KJV) to evaluate that what he tells you is really what God says, and to help keep him on the straight and narrow path.

In the lifetime of Samuel, the Lord spoke directly to him. God speaks to us today through the Scriptures, not through visions or dreams.

Can we get motivated and motivate others, especially our children, to serve the Lord?

Can and do we listen and hear when God speaks to us from his Word?

What did the Lord say to Samuel? He spoke many things directly to him and commanded him to share God’s Words with the people. Read the books of First and Second Samuel this week!

And what is the Lord saying to us? He has given us the Gospel of Jesus Christ in addition to his Law. That Gospel is the message of the forgiveness of sins. That Gospel assures us that whoever believes in Jesus as Savior will be saved eternally. We are his ambassadors, we are to make disciples, teaching them to obey everything Christ has taught us, we are to preach to the world with our words and with our lives. Samuel heard the Words of God and acted on them. May we hear God’s Words and act on them! Amen.