

Sunday Sermon 011424 1 Samuel 3:1-10, John 1:43-51

"God Is Speaking to Me today"

My dear friends at WCUMC, let's reflect on the last words we say or hear before going to bed at night. Similarly, consider the first words spoken or heard upon waking in the morning. How do these expressions influence your daily and overall life? Do they set the tone for peace, comfort, and confidence, or do they evoke anger, sorrow, and confusion?

What are the ideal words you'd like to hear before going to bed and upon waking up? Perhaps, 'Here's breakfast in bed!'—I know that's what everyone wishes to hear first thing in the morning! However, consider the impact if you heard the voice of God.

Honestly, I'm sure it can be a burdensome thing to hear God's voice. For most of us, we feel burdened because we think we are too flawed to hear God's voice. Moreover, we worry that what we hear may cause us more stress and burden. I'm sure the burden was very real when Moses heard God tell him to part the Red Sea or when Noah heard God tell him to build a huge ark. But is God just a god of burden to us?

If you truly heard a voice from the God that you believed in, you would not be burdened by it or refuse it. You could not refuse it, even if you wanted to. Just ask Jonah. But if you can refuse it, then that is not the true voice of God.

Let's examine through today's scriptures how we can hear God's voice in this modern generation. I want to emphasize that the reason we need to listen to God's voice is because it is a means to have fellowship and communication between us and God, who dearly loves us.

First, let's look at the young boy, Samuel. The time and circumstances in which Samuel received his spiritual training were quite bleak. The scripture from 1 Samuel describes an isolated time in the Israelites' history: "In those days, there were very few messages from the Lord, and visions from him were quite rare."

Additionally, Samuel's supposed mentor, Eli, was old and spiritually insensitive. Eli's two young sons were priests, but they were miscreants and a disgrace to Eli. Samuel had no one to teach him and no one to learn from. It's hard to understand how his mother, Hannah, could leave her beloved son to learn about and serve the Lord in such surroundings. But, through her faith, she had experienced God's work in that environment, and through her faith, she entrusted Samuel there.

God shows us His works more through our faith than through our circumstances. By conventional wisdom, Eli's two sons should have grown up as great priests with their upbringing and education, and Samuel should have been the miscreant. But it did not happen that way. God always chooses and uses people of faith, regardless of the time or the conditions. This is the authority and power of our Creator, God.

Until he heard God's voice, Samuel had only learned to serve God through the law. Although he had not yet encountered God experientially, he was awakened spiritually. His deep sleep couldn't suppress his spiritual craving. He was able to answer God when he was called upon.

In some sense, our generation might be in the spiritual dark ages, where people increasingly turn away from God and misinterpret and ignore the truth of Christianity. This is an era where it is not easy to even keep our own faith, just as it was during Samuel's time.

So, is Jesus' salvation degenerating into a mythology? Never, ever. Instead, as He did yesterday, today, and will also tomorrow, God will go on with His living work and with the people who love him.

Secondly, let's pay attention to hearing God's voice. In the Old Testament, God spoke directly to those particular people of His choosing. Therefore, he gave his calling to Samuel to take care of his nation. In the New Testament, God worked through Jesus and the disciples to spread the good news to His nation and beyond, under the co-working of the Holy Spirit.

How can we hear God's voice and calling today? Has it become easier or harder than in the times of the Bible? The apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians Chapter 6, Verses 17 and 19, says, "He who joins himself to the Lord becomes spiritually one with Him. Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourselves but to God."

Why did God make us to be spiritually one with him and as the temple of the Holy Spirit? It is because He wants us to listen to His voice and to have fellowship and communication with him.

We often have a great misunderstanding of God. "The relationship between me and God can never be close," we conclude ourselves. However, God and we are bound to be the closest in the universe. This is because it is a relationship between a father and a child full of the sacrificial love of the Almighty.

God uses different mediums to speak to us: scripture, books, and other people who have heard Him. But He always speaks to us in a voice that we can hear. The tone or volume of his voice, or the length of a vision that He gives us, is variable depending on what He wants to say to us.

In most cases, people want to hear God's secret plans or gain insight into their personal future. But most commonly, God communicates with us through Bible verses, which provide the right comfort and encouragement that we need.

Sometimes, God speaks to us through visions. Furthermore, many people testified that they saw and heard God through their dreams. However, what I experience most often is God speaking through silence. I know speaking through silence may sound like an oxymoron, but I believe other people experience this as well. It can perhaps be the most certain method of hearing God.

Jesus said, "When you pray and ask something, believe that you have received it, and you will be given whatever you ask for" (Mk 11:24). Also, he said, "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and make you remember all that I have told you" (John 14:26).

*Hymn #314 (v. 1) “I come to the garden a lone while the dew is still on the roses, And the voice I hear falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses. And he walks with me, and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own; and the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known.”

Regardless of how God communicates with you, the most important thing is that you have an established relationship with God. Without a relationship established between you and God, God’s voice is just a noisy gong or a clanging bell.

Our generation may be living in very similar times as Samuel’s, when there were “very few messages, and visions from God were quite rare.” However, in times like this, God seeks to speak to his people with greater yearning.

Experts encourage parents to have a lot of conversations with their children while raising them at home. It is said that the conversation between young children and their parents improves their language development skills and broadens their world of thought. Our Creator Father is constantly speaking to us through the Word of the Bible and the work of the Holy Spirit.

According to the record of the Bible, God has always called humans, and he first attempted fellowship with us. Among them, God chose and called Abraham, proclaiming that He loved all people. And through Jesus Christ, he demonstrated His love to the world. Searching for the Word of God and having fellowship with the Holy Spirit is like using our soul's chatting room.

As we read today's text, there must be one question for everyone. That is, why did the Lord not call the priest Eli? Is it because he is too old? Is it because he was guilty? Is it because times have changed? Of course, here is the sin of Priest Eli. Then, does the Lord never deal with the guilty?

However, it is not that the Lord did not call Eli, but Eli could not hear the voice of the Lord. It is because the hearing is lost in the ears of the soul, not the ears of the body. These spiritual accidents occur when we do not have God as the Absolute: there is no repentance, and there is no prayer for or seeking of God.

We know and believe that fellowship with the Lord, who seeks us anytime and anywhere, is guaranteed. When you call on His name, the Lord will never forget that he will teach you how to continue the fellowship with Him every day in the world.

I ask you today to truly confess like young Samuel did: “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” God will endlessly and openly speak to those who are listening. We should always be able to ask for “what he wants of me” rather than “what I want of him.” Then the Lord will speak to us constantly, and we will exist as blessed people who accomplish God's good works.

There are many stops along the path of our lives in the beginning of 2024, including the current political instability, criticism and suppression of Christianity at home and abroad, discord and struggle in international relations, and the deterioration of the biblical view of faith within Christianity. However, remember, church, there are never any stops or hindrances to the invitation of the Lord to call us through the Holy Spirit and speak to us. Amen.

Reflections and Applications for Today's Sermon:

1) You have become a child of God through Jesus Christ. Basically, children have an open way to communicate with their parents. When and where do you mainly hear the voice of the Lord and discover His signs in your daily life? Examine those opportunities and meditate more deeply on the inspiration.

2) Set a period for a week and confess it to the Lord when you wake up in the morning or when you go to bed at night: “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” Practice listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you and taking notes.

3) Is there something the Holy Spirit is revealing to you to open the way for you to hear God's voice? Listen to what repentance the Holy Spirit calls you to do or what special prayer of petition he directs you to.