

The title for today's message is: God's Voice: Hearing, Knowing and finding it

Jesus said: **Follow Me**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

There are three questions that need answered, and that's what were going to try and do today.

Now here are the three questions that I want to answer in this message: #1 Does God really speak to people?

#2 If so, how do we know that it is God Who is talking? And finally #3 How do we position ourselves to better hear the voice of God?

Now, in order to answer these questions, we're going to look at Samuel and Eli's experience in the Old Testament Lesson.

When this story occurred, Samuel was about 12 or 13 years of age. He was the servant of the priest Eli, who was by now a very old man.

Now both of them had turned in for the night. Young Samuel, the lesson tells us was asleep in the temple, close to where the ark of God was kept.

During the night God called out to Samuel. Samuel, thinking that it was Eli who had called him, rushes out to Eli and says, "Here I am.

You called me?" The old priest says, "No my boy, I didn't call you go back to bed." So Samuel goes back to bed.

Again God calls out to the boy, and again young Samuel goes to Eli. "Here I am. You called me?"

The old priest again says, "No my boy, I didn't call you go back to bed." When this happened the third time, Eli finally realizes that it must be God calling out to Samuel.

Now, the question is. Why did it take Eli three times to finally figure out that it was God who was calling?

In the case of Samuel, the answer is relatively simple. He hadn't yet been instructed on how to recognize God's voice.

He was a young boy who was an apprentice, still learning the ropes. But Eli the priest, he's a different story.

You see, Eli had allowed himself to wander from God's grace allowing corruption to permeate the ministry that God had charged him to oversee.

And don't forget Eli's two sons, also priests, they treated their ministry with utter contempt, refusing to honor God.

They robbed God by putting themselves first. They took the best of the offerings up front living immoral and impure lives.

They extorted God's people by threatening to use force to get the best of the offerings. In short, they were arrogant, and self-important bullies.

And Eli couldn't do anything to control them. Scriptures say: "Eli's sons were wicked men with no regard for the LORD.

Now did you notice the problem mentioned in the first verse of our lesson? You see, God wasn't talking to Eli nor his sons anymore.

We were told that prophecy and visions from God, had all but stopped. The author of 1 Samuel said: **"...In those days a prophecy from the Lord was rare; visions were infrequent."**

Look, God had just pulled away, removed Himself from the ministry that Eli and his sons exercised.

His voice had become scarce; He didn't want to be around these guys. Is it any wonder that Eli failed to recognize God's voice.

So now, in talking to the boy Samuel, God was demonstrating that the time of repentance for Eli's sons had long past.

My friends, God still struggles to talk to people. He still desires to come to us to draw us close.

But reality is we remove ourselves from Him. We do this by grieving the Spirit through our own sinfulness.

When we do those things that offend God, we can't hear or understand his voice. We can't hear or understand his voice when we avoid his temple.

We can't hear God's voice when we, for whatever reason fail to worship Him or revere his Word.

Here's the first test: What does the voice that we hear tell us about Jesus Christ? Knowing that God will never point us to a false hope.

When God directs us, it is always to Christ, always to His Cross and His Resurrection, always to His forgiveness and always to his promises.

God's voice always encourages us in our walk of faith. In fact, Jesus was very clear about this.

He said, ***“My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.”***

And the third test: When God speaks to us, it is always consistent with his Word. God will never add or take away from what He has revealed to us.

Jesus tells us: Everyone who hears the words of prophecy and adds anything to them. God will add to him the plagues described in the text.

And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life.

To do this, we need to have a clear understanding of God's Word and to check every message that we hear and compare it with Christ's teachings.

All right: Up to now we've looked at the questions: “Does God really speak to people?”

We said that He did, but that we needed to know that living a life committed to sin, like Eli's sons, can and will cause God to walk away from us.

We also considered the question: “How do we know that it is God who is talking?” We looked at three tests: What does the voice say about Christ.

Now here’s the final question: How do we position ourselves to better hear the voice of God?

Some years ago there was a popular song named, “Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places.”

Well, if we were looking for God in all the wrong places and believe we hear God’s voice, look out!

Look, God promises us not to be: in horoscopes, tarot cards, fortune cookies, or aliens from outer space. who claim that we are clones of them.

We might be hearing a voice if we are looking for God in these things but I can guarantee you that it isn’t God’s voice. So where do we look?

Consider where Samuel was when God called to him. He was in the temple. He was where God promised to be.

Samuel received God’s Word in a manner that was consistent with how God had previously revealed Himself.

Samuel needed to be receptive to God’s voice: “Speak, oh Lord, your servant listens.”

Today, we can hear God’s voice in the temple. It comes to us in the wonderful sacraments: our Baptism, and the Lord’s supper.

My friends, I have a confession to make to you: I was very discouraged for much of last year. It was a very, very difficult year for me.

I found myself spending more time worrying and fretting about the issues of my ministry than listening to God.

And then a wonderful brother told me to just chill. He said, "Spend time with God. Read his Word, pray, listen for his guidance."

He said; Get away and make some time to just read God's Word and pray. And as I've yielded myself to God His Word has come.

It's been a wonderful reunion to find God just where He said He would be. Peace and joy have now returned to my ministry.

God had never wandered, He'd been speaking to me all along I wasn't listening. And I now know this; God is seeking you out too.

Just as Jesus called for Samuel in our Gospel Lesson, He is looking for you too. He is speaking to you. Why?

Because God desires full communion with you, that's right, a heart to heart with you. Why else would Jesus pay the price for us on the Cross?

So, if you need to find joy and communion with God? Chill out, make time for God and His Word and He'll be there for you.

Amen!

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.