

26. Encouragement for the Journey

Plus, Strength for the Day



Sermon

Wednesday, 17th February 2021 – Glenda Bolitho



Bible Reading: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Greeting

Greetings and a very warm welcome to our service here at St Luke's Anglican Church Concord and to those who may be following us on line. I'm Glenda Bolitho a member of the ministry team here at St Luke's and we gather together today to hear God's word, to pray with one another, and to share our time together.

Before I commence let me pray.

*"May the words of my mouth and the
Meditation of my heart
Be pleasing in your sight
O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."*

Amen

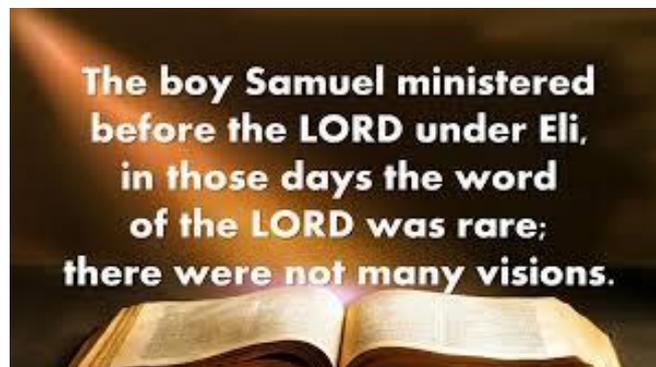
The Word Of The LORD Was Rare In Those Days

Introduction

To-day we turn to the First Book of Samuel. At the time of our reading, the young Samuel has been serving in the Lord's Temple for some time, ministering under Eli, the priest. Jewish historians place Samuel as being 12 years of age.

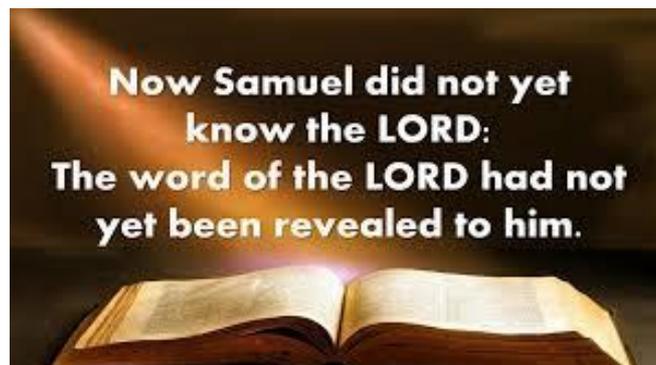
It had been a spiritual dry spell in Israel. The priesthood had fallen into corruption, and the people had fallen way from God. Earlier in the book, when the devout Hannah prayed in the temple - her lips moving silently in the intensity of her prayer – the chief priest, Eli, the highest ranking religious professional in the land, thought she was drunk. Had he never seen such a heartfelt prayer?

That's the spiritual context in which Samuel grew up. He was literally the answer to his mother Hannah's prayer – the prayer she offered in Eli's temple. But when Hannah handed her boy over to Eli, she was leaving him in a world where God had seemingly gone silent. "The word of the Lord was rare in those days, there was no widespread revelation" (1 Sam 3:1).



God Calls Samuel

God didn't remain silent, however. He spoke to the boy Samuel in the dead of the night. Three times Samuel heard the voice of God audibly, and each time he ran to Eli, thinking the old priest had called for him. *"Here I am; you called me."* By the third time, however, Eli understood that it must have been God calling Samuel, and he instructed him to lie back down and, should he hear the voice of God again, pray the expectant prayer, *"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening"* (1 Sam 3:9). The Lord spoke a fourth time, and Samuel spoke as Eli had instructed him. The Lord spoke, Samuel heard, and thus began the prophetic career of Samuel. Under his spiritual leadership, Israel came out of its spiritual depression and entered into its golden age – the era of King David, whom Samuel himself anointed.



Listening to the Voice of God

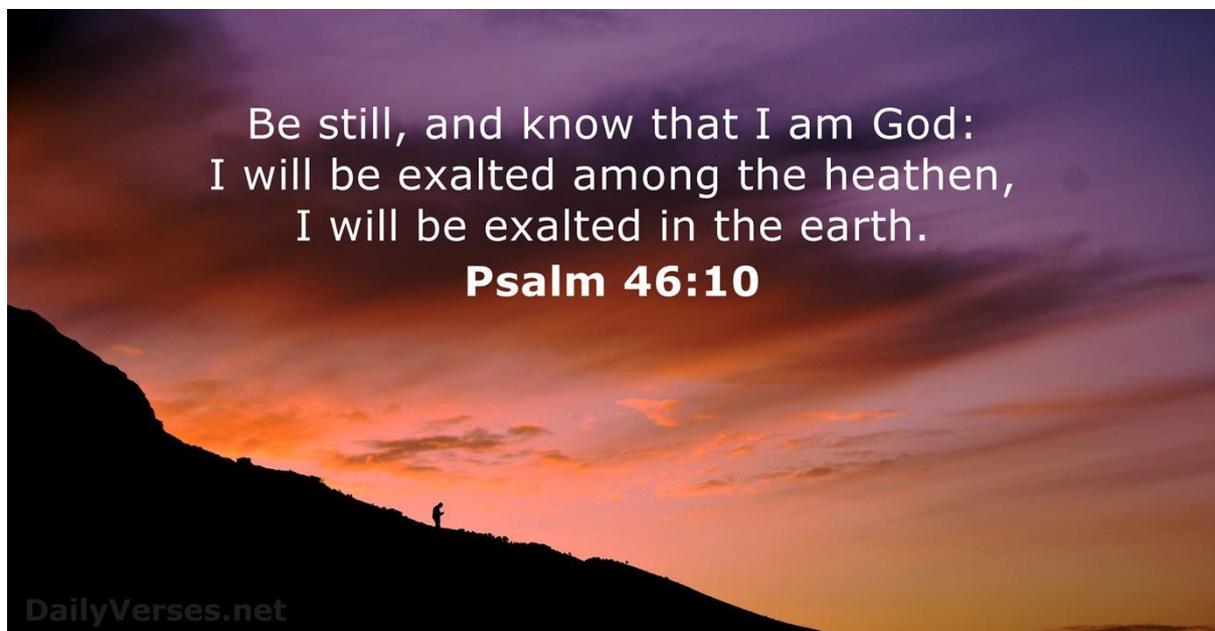
In our own era, Mother Teresa had this to say about listening to God: *"Listen in silence, because if your heart is full of other things you cannot hear the voice of God. But when you have listened to the voice of God in the stillness of your heart, then your heart is filled with God."*

Theologian, Mary Scifres has this to say about the passage we have read to-day: *"The voice of God comes in different ways and at different times. Listen. Look for the signs. Make time to listen, time to*

breathe deeply, sit quietly, or walk slowly; read the Scriptures carefully or pray silently. Take time to listen to God and to focus on the events of the week, to receive messages God is sending.” She adds, tongue in cheek, that “if Samuel had been counting sheep or worrying about tomorrow’s services, he might not have heard ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ when God called.”

So what thoughts can we take with us to-day?

Knowing the Heart of God



Well, if we want to know the heart of God, we need to be sure our prayer life includes time for listening, not just for talking. Prayer is communication. And prayer isn't just a matter of one person reeling off a monologue at another person. In Psalm 46:10 we read, *“Be still and know that I am God.”* Trust God to speak. For He does speak to those who say *“Your servant is listening.”* He probably won't speak audibly. But in the silence, He will bring to mind the truths you know you can build a life on. He will shape your desires and check the desires that don't accord with His will. He will prepare your heart and mind to see His clear guidance in the everyday events and conversations of life. Listen. God still speaks.

The Hebrew word “*shama*” translated “*hears*” in 1 Samuel 3:10, means to “*listen*” or to “*obey*”. This important Old Testament word appears over 1,100 times. It implies that the listener is giving his or her total attention to the one who is speaking. In some cases, the word connotes more than listening and indicates obedience to what has been said. Abraham was blessed not only for hearing but obeying God’s voice. We read this in Genesis 22:18 where the word is translated as “*obeyed*”. In the present passage Samuel is **listening** for God’s word and is determined to obey it. This young man is an example of the kind of person God delights to use - one who is always ready to receive His Word and to follow it.

Responding to the Voice of God

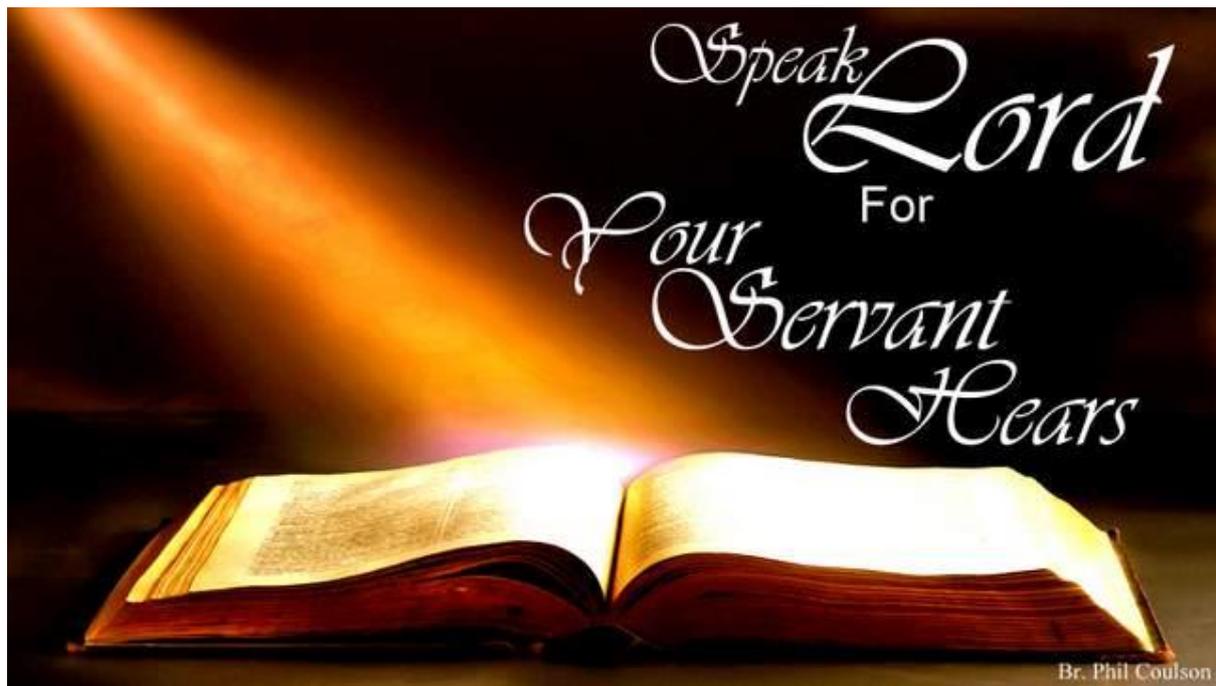
Listening and responding is vital in a relationship with God. Although God does not always use the sound of a human voice, He always speaks clearly through the Bible. To receive his message, we must be ready to listen and act upon what He tells us. Like Samuel, be ready to say “*Here I am*”, when God calls us to action.



Samuel was young, but he was learning to listen to God. At that time, many priests, and even King Saul would not do so. The whole nation of Israel found it difficult, as we can hear in this short excerpt from

Psalm 95:6-9, *“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. To-day if you would hear his voice, “Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did at Masah in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested me, they tried me though they had seen what I did.”*”

Each day we can begin our prayers this way: *“Speak to me, Lord, for I am listening.”*



Conclusion

As we conclude, the message from 1 Samuel 3:1-10, is a very timely message for us today, this being Ash Wednesday and the very beginning of the Lenten Season, which leads us through to Easter and the death and resurrection of our Blessed Lord. Let us pray that like Samuel, God will speak to us, speak to us afresh; and that we will be ready to hear His voice.

AMEN

Bible Reading

1 Samuel 3:1-10

The Lord Calls Samuel

³ The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.

² One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. ³ The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. ⁴ Then the Lord called Samuel.

Samuel answered, "Here I am." ⁵ And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

⁶ Again the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

⁸ A third time the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹ So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰ The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."