



Saint John United Methodist Church
12700 W. Hwy. 42, Prospect, KY 40059
stjohnky.com

Message for September 26, 2021
"Storyline: Samuel"
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: I Samuel 3:1-10

My Story

I gave my life to Jesus at the age of thirteen. I remember the night I did that like it was yesterday. Christ's love overwhelmed me. I didn't hear from Christ audibly, but I sure did sense him leaning into my life, drawing me close to him. My life hasn't been the same since.

It wasn't long after my acceptance of Christ that I began to hear a call to go into ministry. I accepted that call and continue to do so to this very day. I am thankful for the way God has led me. It has been a wonderful journey.

God's Call upon Samuel's Life

This morning we consider God's call upon Samuel's life. Samuel heard that call around the age of twelve or thirteen. I am not trying to liken Samuel's life to my own, but we at least have that in common. Being called by God at a relatively young age is a part of Samuel's story.

Over the next six weeks we will be considering the stories of a number of individuals both from the Bible and from our own congregation who responded to God's call. Given all those stories, this new sermon series is aptly titled "*Storyline*."

I pray that as you hear these stories of God's call, you will consider his call for your own life.

Let's hear then our scripture for today, I Samuel 3:1-10.

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

One night, Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. 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. Then the LORD called Samuel.

Samuel answered, "Here I am." 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.

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."

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

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. 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.

The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Sitting in Silence

My mom has a tough time hearing like she once did. Her hearing loss seems to be getting progressively worse. She has tried hearing aids but doesn't like them. To put it another way, she refuses to wear them.

In fact, we just recently brought them out to the Beehive of Goshen where she is now living, and they just sort of disappeared. We figure she threw them in the garbage. She said to me the other day, *"I just sit here in silence."*

We all realize she would have a much better quality of life if she could hear. We are going to give hearing aids another try. I might use a little super glue this time.

It's tough not being able to hear. Many who have permanent hearing loss compensate in marvelous ways and they are to be commended. Others just sort of make their way, not really knowing what they are missing.

Spiritually, it's tough not being able to hear, particularly when it comes to the things God wants to say. Suffering in that sort of silence is always tough.

The Difference Between Hearing and Listening

In everyday life, there's a big difference between hearing and listening, particularly when you consider the many voices that regularly speak into our lives. In a lot of ways, hearing is quite passive. Listening is more active in nature.

When we listen, we attune our ears to the one who is trying to communicate with us.

I tell those newlyweds who meet with me for their premarital counseling that communication is critical to the health of their relationship. *“If you communicate rightly all other things begin to fall in place.”*

Communication is not just a matter of sharing, but it is a matter of listening as well.

Author Bruce Larson writes that *“One of the greatest gifts God can give us in life is the gift of listening. Listening is the key to success and perhaps even survival in most relationships.”*

Listening is also critical to the health of our relationship with God.

What is God trying to say to you?

The Still Small Voice of God

Sometimes when it comes to hearing from God, we figure that nothing short of a burning bush experience will do. For me, God's is always speaking through *“his still small voice.”* He communicates that way all the time.

The fact that the Lord spoke to Elijah in this way has always encouraged me.

In I Kings 19:10ff, the Lord was about to *“pass by,”* and Elijah was desirous to hear from him.

- At first, there was a powerful wind, but the Lord was not in the wind.
- Next came an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake.
- Next came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire.
- After that came a gentle whisper. It was in this *“still small voice”* that Elijah heard from the Lord.

Don't always expect some grand display when it comes to hearing from God. More times than not God speaks in ways that only those ready to listen will hear.

Speak for Your Servant Is Listening

Samuel was dedicated to the God from birth. His mom saw to that. Upon being weaned Samuel was delivered to the temple and into the care of Eli the High Priest.

The scripture reports that *“the word of the Lord was rare”* in those times. The people probably just weren't listening.

That was certainly the case for Eli's sons who made a mockery of the worship of God.

God was still at work though, even though his people didn't always notice. They were just sort of going through the motions spiritually. That's when God decided to lean into Samuel's life. One night while Samuel rested God called out three times. Each time Samuel thought it was Eli calling.

The scripture tells us that *“Samuel did not yet know the Lord. The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.”*

I read that to say that Samuel knew of God but had not yet experienced him. He was about to though in a big way. The intentions of Samuel’s mother only went so far. Samuel had to accept for himself.

It comes to us all to accept for ourselves. It comes to us to get to know the Lord and, in knowing the Lord, we will find ourselves at a much better place to listen to what he has to say.

After the Lord called the third time, it finally dawned on Eli that the One calling much have been the Lord. *“Go back,”* he said, *“and if the Lord calls again answer, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’”*

That is exactly how Samuel responded when the Lord approached him for the fourth time. Samuel listened and followed the Lord the rest of his life.

Storyline

As a part of this sermon series, we will be hearing from others who are responding to God’s call. This morning let’s hear from Scott Bartelt who has also said, *“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”*

(Scott’s testimony is not included here.)

What About You?

- How is God calling you?
- When it comes to his call upon your life, how are you responding?

Rest assured your response will demand a leap of faith.

It’s interesting that upon responding to God’s call young Samuel was given a pretty tough assignment. Samuel was to speak a harsh word to Eli about what his sons were doing. I am sure that wasn’t easy to do.

Responding to God’s call always leads us to stretch. It leads us to move beyond what’s comfortable. The interesting thing about what’s comfortable is that if we are not careful, we can slip into complacency awfully quick, which is never a good place to be.

We had shared a couple of weeks ago in talking about being changed by Christ that *“great things never come from your comfort zone.”* How’s that going to look for you as you seek to respond to what God is trying to say to you?

May your response be like that of Samuel’s, *“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”*