

Hopeful Sleeping Trouble

1 Samuel 3:1-20)

INTRO:

Sometimes God surprises us with whom he chooses to use to deliver his message or to do some work for his glory. Here **WE** are, all of us professionally trained clergy and mature Christians, ready willing and able...and God bypasses us all and uses a youth to speak his word to the world. *But it's ok!* God will probably use us clergy, and you mature folks too, in time. When the time is right.

The Church has to be open to God's ways.

We should rejoice when God surprises us beyond our expectations by calling unexpected people to speak for God and to do God's works in the world. *You may wonder what this all has to do with Hopeful Sleeping Trouble! Because, you know, Sleeping Trouble is rarely Hopeful!*

ME:

Whenever I wake up, I am usually up for the night. They say that what causes insomnia is our worrying about not sleeping. I've learned something interesting and helpful I want to share with you. Some say that lying there with your eyes closed is almost as **restful** and **restorative** as sleep-

ing. *I hope that is true!* Thinking that is true helps me to fall back asleep . . . sometimes. And if it is true, it's okay if I don't fall back to sleep, because I can just lie there relaxing and get most of the benefits of being asleep.

That's some form of hope in a restless night!

YOU:

Are you able to fall back asleep if you wake us in the middle of the night? If not, are you still going to worry about it? Or, are you going to shut your eyes and think happy thoughts and get up when your alarm goes off? What did Samuel do when he was awakened in the middle of the night? Let's take a look and a listen now:

Let's pray together first...

GOD:

1 Samuel 3:1–10 3:1 Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

2 At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; 3 the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. 4 Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" 5 and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. 6 The Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said,

“Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.” 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. 8 The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. 9 Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’ ” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” 11 Then the Lord said to Samuel, “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. 12 On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13 For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. 14 Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever.”

15 Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. 16 But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” He said, “Here I am.” 17 Eli said, “What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.” 18 So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, “It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him.”

19 As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. 20 And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord. 21 The Lord

continued to appear at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

WE:

Samuel, a boy, is called by God to be a prophet, to speak God's truth to Israel, even though that truth may be tough for God's people to hear.

The passage begins with dark clouds on rather horizon:

"The Lord's word was rare at that time."

Eli, had made a real mess of things. His family was leading worship in corrupt ways, similar to the corruption present in much of Israel at the time.

The Lord's word was rare, *but we get to listen in on one of those rare times the Lord spoke!* God did not speak right to Eli, the high priest, but to a little boy named Samuel. The opportunity for Israel to turn things around comes in a voice crashing into the night, calling, **"Samuel, Samuel!"** **The response? "Speak Lord, your servant is listening."**

Eli, the veteran high priest doesn't hear God calling, but young Samuel does. Young Samuel will bear all the weight of bringing the message of divine judgment. Old Eli will fall under that judgement with his children too. And Samuel will do as God has called him to do, even though he is so young. Even though will cost him personally.

God does this in the story that weaves through Scripture. God offers new beginnings with a voice in the night. This voice that speaks to Samuel is the same voice that spoke, **“Let there be light!”** over the dark void. It is like this for us too, like the many times new beginnings, new life, were spoken by God’s voice into the night.

Everyone in the Temple are asleep that night. Eli and his boys are through with their Temple duties for the day. The dust has settled, the pews are empty in the dark sanctuary. It is quiet.

Not everyone sleeps well, though. One has Hopeful Sleeping Trouble. Young Samuel sleeps peacefully in the darkness of night. Until . . . *“Samuel, Samuel!” stabs the night’s peace with a call for the boy to be a prophet!*

The darkness of the night parallels the darkness of this point in Israel’s history. A time of moral confusion, a time when everyone followed **“the devices and desires”** of their own hearts rather the ways of God. This is why the passage says so clearly that a Word from God was rare at that time. **Perhaps we can understand some, or all of this, ourselves?! Are these the same clothes we wear everyday? Does God seem silent to us?**

Anyway, the seeming silence from God did not last forever. Remember, God’s voice shook the night with Samuel’s name. God’s people will have a prophet of God’s own choosing.

Sometimes we “**mature**” followers of Jesus can lose our ability to hear God’s call while the youngsters hear it clear as a bell. God calls and uses whomever God chooses! Let me show you what I mean:

*I read about a preacher and her first meeting with the leaders of her new congregation, an elderly man arose and said, “**Nothing against you personally, but I don’t think this congregation is ready for a woman preacher. You seem like a nice person, but I just can’t believe that the bishop would send you here.**”*

*She replied, “**Well that makes at least two of us. Sir, I can tell that you and I are going to hit it off just fine, since we think alike. I fought God for twenty-two years. I told the Lord he must have lost his mind, calling somebody like me into the ministry. If you don’t want me as your pastor, let me assure you that I’ve already told God that I don’t want to be your pastor. But, sometimes the Lord just won’t take no for an answer.**”*

God will use whomever God may choose. Remember that and don’t be surprised when you hear a Word from God from an unexpected place.

THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

If God seems silent, be silent and God may just surprise you with a Word.

YOU:

So how will you work on getting back to sleep? Is there any hope for that? Is there any hope for sleeping trouble?

CLOSE:

The night after I began writing this message, I woke up at 3:30 am! I laid there for a while with my eyes closed and did not get up until I *had slept 8 1/2 hours!* That gives me hope for future sleeping trouble.

Where is the hope in this Sleeping Trouble?

The hope is that the church will learn to listen to God. That we will improve in our ability to notice the work that God is doing in raising up a new generation of Christians. I hope that us older believers will be like old Eli and patiently instruct the young, saying, **“Go and lie down. If he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD. Your servant is listening.’”** I hope that the young will be bold enough to risk saying, **“I’m here.”** And as scared as we may be to do it, we need to get out of their way and let them do what God wants them to do. To let them make mistakes and to learn from them, just like we did and still do.

Let’s be silent together now, and hope to hear a Word from God...