

January 14, 2018
Sermon for 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
1 Samuel 3:1-10

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

1 Samuel 3:1–10 (ESV)

¹ Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision. ² At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. 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, 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 And the LORD called again, “Samuel!” and Samuel arose 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 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose 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 hears.’ ” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰ And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears.”

Grace, Mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Samuel was one of God's great ones. Four hundred years after Moses led God's people to the Promised Land, the Lord called Samuel to anoint Saul and then David, the first of Israel's kings.

Samuel was God's power behind their throne. Already with his birth story, we learn that Samuel was a gift straight from God. When he was only age 3, his grateful mother, Hannah, gave Samuel back to God. He grew up with the Lord's priest Eli, serving at the Lord's tabernacle.

When I was in Sunday School, I loved this story. The boy Samuel, now twelve or so, helps Eli, about eighty and nearly blind. And what a surprise! By name, Samuel clearly hears the Lord calling to him.

Would you not love to hear the Lord's own voice personally calling to you? Samuel shows himself to be the obedient son that Eli's own sons were not.

His bond with Eli is based not on family line but on shared faith, shared service to the Lord. God gives a clear call to Samuel. By name, no less, He calls: "*Samuel! Samuel!*" I want to hear God's call so loud and clear. Don't you?

Where will God call to us? How will he call? What will he call us to do? I love to hear this from Samuel, because it opens our ears.

Yes, God does call to us! Listen! Do you hear?

Jesus Speaks to Us from His House, in His Person, So We Can Speak for Him.

Where will the Lord call to us? Wherever he pleases!

He could call to us in some place crowded with unbelievers.

Abraham, father of all the faithful, was with the moon worshipers in Syria. Or God could call to us in some deserted wasteland. Moses was alone, shepherding his flock at desolate Mount Sinai when God called him.

In today's Gospel, Nathanael had just been under the fig tree when he came to hear the Lord's voice. The Lord will call to us wherever, whenever He knows best.

But we can expect much more. Where has the Lord promised to call to us? Same as for Samuel, the Lord has promised to call to us in His holy house. The text says, "*Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli*" (v 1a).

Samuel was right there at God's tabernacle, the Lord's worship home. "*And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision*" (v 1b).

Did God not have anything to say?

Or was He opening the ears of a new servant?

"*At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place*" (v 2). The aged priest was becoming physically blind. Worse yet, he was going spiritually blind.

The previous chapter tells how Eli was honoring his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, above the Lord! He was letting them continue to serve as priests even though they used their calling to cheat people and hurt the helpless.

So Eli "*was lying down in his own place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out*" (vv 2b–3a). Against the darkness, the Lord always continues shining! "*Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was*" (3b).

Where will the Lord call to you? God speaks to us from His house.
 Late, late that night, as Samuel sleeps, the calling wakes him. (*yawn*) He answers:
"Here I am," and he runs to Eli. "You called." "I did not call you. Go back to bed." So Samuel goes back, lies down.

Again comes the call. "Samuel." Again he gets up and runs to Eli.
 "Here I am. You called me." Again the old man cracks open an eye.

But for some reason, as far as we know, he's not grumpy about it. He just says: *"I did not call, my son. Back to bed."* Poor Eli. He knows his ministry is about over, probably not much use to God or anyone else anymore and now this boy keeps calling and waking him up. He can't even get a good nights sleep.

"Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him" (v 7). Samuel had been learning Moses' Scripture. But until now, he had not personally experienced God's direct calling.

"Samuel," comes the call the third time. Little Samuel gets up again and goes to Eli. *"Here I am. For you called me."*

Who was this calling, calling, calling for Samuel?
 At last it dawns on the high priest.

In all his years as high priest, forty years ruling Israel, had Eli once heard the voice of the Lord? Had Eli expected the Lord to speak up?

But there God had promised to be for His people!
 Where has God promised to speak to us? Where but in His holy house?
"Where two or three are gathered" in his name (Mt 18:20), there God has promised to call to His faithful people.

Eli tells the boy, *“Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.’ ”*

What a prayer for you and me today! Lord, you have gathered us here in your name. Open our ears to hear you speaking, to listen to your words calling to us. So Samuel goes back to lie down and he waits for the Lord’s Word.

How will the Lord call to us here? However He pleases!
To Abraham he called in some vision (Gen 15:1).

To Moses he called from the strange burning bush.
To Nathanael he came from the backwater town of Nazareth.

The Lord can, does and will call to us in whatever way He knows is best.
Not just for us, but for His kingdom.

But we can count on much more than that. The Lord has told us
where to listen. How has He promised to call?

Same as for Samuel, the Lord has promised to call to us Himself!
The text amazes me. The fourth time, Samuel did not simply hear the Lord’s
voice. It says, *“And the Lord came and stood, calling as at other times,
“Samuel! Samuel!”* (v 10a).

The almighty Lord, He who had promised to be present with His people, He, who
hovered enthroned above the ark of the covenant. For Samuel, He wraps Himself
in human form. He “stands there” to call the boy!

Do you see Him Samuel? Is this some dream or hoax?

Or is it the living Lord standing before you?

Has not God promised to do even more for us! Not just for the moment, so that we might hear His call. God's Word actually "*became flesh and dwelt among us.*" We heard this at Christmas text: John's Gospel tells us: "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,*" (Jn 1:14).

This same Jesus—He who showed Himself to Samuel, who was born our Brother, who called Nathanael. He who promises to be here where two or three gather in his name. For us, He will come, stand here with us.

Jesus' standing with us is every bit as real as it was with Samuel that night. The Lord didn't come to Samuel because He was any less sinful than Hophni or Phinehas or Eli...or you and me.

No, He came *because* the sins of Samuel—and Hophni and Phinehas and Eli and you and me—the sins that made the word of the Lord rare in those days, that would in fact have made impossible any communication between sinful us and the holy God—those sins have been taken away.

Christ Jesus came to stand *with* in order to stand *in*—to stand in for us under the punishment of all sin. To hang actually, on the cross.

So now we await the Lord's last call: And we will see Him, flesh and blood, our risen Lord! I can hardly wait. How about you? Well you don't have to! Already today, in this house, Jesus has promised to speak to us.

How? By His Word proclaimed in His. His Word here is for all.
 You want Him to call you by name? Already today, in this house, He's
 promised to name you. How? By the water and the Word.

He called, me by name, 51 years ago this month as the pastor of Ascension Lutheran church in Austin spoke the words: Larry Neil Knobloch, I baptize you. In the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

But you want Him be here for you today, your real Brother, all alive? Already this day, in this, His house, He has promised. By His bread, His wine, He calls! “This is my body, this my blood, given and shed for you!”

If we don’t hear the Lord’s call to us, it’s not as if He’s gone mute. His voice is an open Book! If we don’t hear the Lord’s call to us, we are the ones who have gone deaf to His Word.

That’s why we keep coming to worship. That’s why we set aside time for private devotions, *Portals of Prayer*, and family devotions. That’s why we gather together for Bible study and to speak of our faith with friends.

We live to hear God’s call to us, the living voice of Jesus! Who could guess where and how He promises to call to us? In His house, in His person, He calls us!

Ours is a surprising God. Who could believe for what purpose He’s called us?

What will He call you to do?

Well, whatever He wants! Abraham, at age 75, God called to move to the other side of His world, and at age 99, to father new nations.

Moses, the fugitive murderer after forty years, still hiding from Egypt, God called to go straight back to Egypt to lead His enslaved people free.

Nathanael, awed at his first sight of Jesus, Jesus called to see and believe still more. Whoever we are, however long or sinful our history, God will call us to do whatever He knows is best.

But we can expect much more than that!

Same as for Samuel. What will the Lord call you to do?

God calls us to speak for Him.

The Lord called Samuel to speak a hard word. “Eli, your sons, disobedient all these years and deaf to the Lord’s word—they will be cut off as priests. Your family’s service to the Lord is over.”

The only Good News was that the Lord—no matter how blocked His priests’ ears, no matter how faithless His people’s hearts—the Lord will break through to make His Word known. His Word rescues. His Word gives life.

The Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that today’s average American before age 50 has worked more than eleven jobs. Count also your other important callings—your roles at home, at play, and at church.

In every area of our lives, God calls us to serve others in that vocation. We get to love and serve with His strength, just as He loves and serves us.

He has placed you in the world just where He needs you.

What has the Lord called you to do?

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)

Like Samuel the first and second and third time, maybe we did not recognize that the Lord was calling to us. Yet He continues to call.

He calls to us gathered here in His home. He calls through His living Word. He calls us to sing His praises everywhere.

Like Samuel, will should answer with humble, heartfelt faith:
“Speak, Lord, for your servant hears!”

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria

Sermon Outline

Jesus Speaks to Us from His House, So We Can Speak for Him.

1 Samuel 3:1-10

- I. Where will the Lord call to you?
- II. How will the Lord call to you?
- III. What will the Lord call you to do?