

January 18, 2015
Sermon for The Second Sunday after the Epiphany
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
1 Samuel 3:1–10 (11-20)

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

1 Samuel 3:1–20 (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.”

¹¹ Then the LORD said to Samuel, “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. ¹² On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³ And I declare to 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 atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.” ¹⁵ Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. ¹⁶ But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” And he said, “Here I am.” ¹⁷ And 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. And he said, “It is the LORD. Let him do what seems good to him.” ¹⁹ And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the LORD.

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. (1 Sam 10, 16)

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 weaned, his grateful mother, Hannah, gave Samuel back to God. He grew up with the Lord's priest Eli, serving at the Lord's tabernacle. (1Sam 1:23ff)

Since I was in Sunday School, I loved this story since I was little. The young 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.

But today, I love this story especially for God's 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?

I remember when Jesus opened my ears. When He was calling me to serve Him as your pastor. He called me to be your servant of God's Word here. No doubts in the matter as I never felt like a stranger. Even though you filled out the paperwork, it was God that led your hand and His Holy Spirit that led me to accept even though I had no idea where Bowie was or who any of you were. God was calling and I was listening.

Where will God call to us? How will he call? What will he call us to do?

Listen to how He called Samuel. Yes, God does call to us too! Even today.

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 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?

The Lord has promised to call to us where His holy Word is proclaimed.

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 home. "*And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision*" (v 1b).

God was opening the ears of a His 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 helpless. Worse, 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 abuse 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” (v 3b).

See this! 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. (*Wipe sleep from your eyes. Perhaps act out the story?*) *“Here I am,”* he answers. 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 dashes to his Eli. *“Here I am. You called me.”* Again the old man pries open his dim eyes. *“I did not call, my son. Back to bed.”* *“Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him”* (v 7). Even Eli didn’t quite realize who was calling and what was going on.

“Samuel,” comes the call the third time. The boy rises and goes to Eli. *“Here I am. You did call me.”*

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

Eli tells the 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.”*

What a prayer for you and me today! Lord, you have gathered us here in Your house, 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. He restfully waits for the Lord’s Word. How will the Lord call to us here? However He pleases!

To Abraham He called in a vision (Gen 15:1).

To Moses He called from a burning bush.

To Nathanael He came as the stranger from a nowhere place called Nazareth.

The Lord will call to us in whatever way He knows is best.

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 in His own voice!

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 invisibly. 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? Is this some dream, Samuel? Is this some hoax?

Or is it the living Lord you see?

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."

The Christmas text should still fill us with wonder. John's Gospel proclaims:, *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."* (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!

And Jesus' standing with us is every bit as real as it was with Samuel that night.

Truth is, we today understand far more clearly why He stood with Samuel—and with us. The Lord didn't come to Samuel because he was any less sinful than Hophni or Phinehas or Eli.

He came because the sins of Hophni, Phinehas, Eli and Samuel AND you and me—the sins of the whole world! Our sins made any communication between impossible us and God—but those sins have been taken away.

Christ Jesus came to stand in for us and take the punishment for all sin.

That price was paid on the cross.

So now we await the last call: “My sister, my brother, rise up! My beloved, come home!” And we will see Him, flesh and blood, our risen Lord!

Can't wait? You don't have to! Already today, in this house, He's promised to speak to us. How? By His Word, proclaimed in your presence today.

You want him to call you by name? He already has, in His house, He's made you His own in the waters of Holy Baptism as you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

But you want Him be here for you today? As He has promised, as you approach His table. His very body and blood, given and shed for you in Holy Communion.

If we don't hear the Lord's call to us, it's not because He isn't calling, it's because we aren't listening, we 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!

What is He calling you to do?

Well, whatever He wants!

God called Abraham to move to the other side of his world, at age 75 to father a new nation. Moses, the fugitive murderer after forty years, 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 foul 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.

Sometimes, the Lord does call us to speak hard words as He called Samuel to do. We do our friends no favor when we leave them wallowing in sin's quicksand. But even when we must shout warnings, the Lord calls us to throw His lifeline to the sinking sinner, to tell of Jesus' death for their forgiveness.

His Word rescues. His Word gives life.

Whether you think you are doing something important or not, God has placed you in the world just where He needs you.

What has the Lord called you to do? St. Peter says,

"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 Pet 2:9).

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

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, God will equip you when He calls so that you too might 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.

Soli Deo Gloria – To God alone be the glory

Sermon Outline

Jesus Speaks to Us in Person, We are Called to Speak for Him
1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20)

1. Where will the Lord call to you?
2. How will the Lord call to you?
3. What will the Lord call you to do?