

Minnesota Valley Church

Date: Sunday, January 14, 2024

Church Year Date: 4th Sunday after Epiphany

THEME:

Prelude: Carol Gustafson

Singers: Osthus-Reynolds

CALL TO WORSHIP: *Psalm 139:1-6*

PASTOR: O LORD, you have searched me

ALL: And you know me.

PASTOR: You know when I sit and when I rise;

ALL: You perceive my thoughts from afar.

PASTOR: You discern my going out and my lying down;

ALL: You are familiar with all my ways.

PASTOR: Before a word is on my tongue

ALL: You know it completely, O LORD.

PASTOR: You hem me in--behind and before;

ALL: You have laid your hand upon me.

PASTOR: Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,

ALL: Too lofty for me to attain.

Hymn #207 "Praise the Lord, Ye Heavens, Adore Him"

Confession of Sin: *I lay my sins on Jesus, The spotless Lamb of God; He bears them all and frees us, From the accursed load. I bring my guilt to Jesus, To wash my crimson stains, White in His blood most precious, 'Till not a spot remains. Amen*

Children's Sermon:

Reader: Nathan Kalstad

EPISTLE LESSON: *1 Corinthians 6:12-20 "Everything is permissible for me"-but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"-but I will not be mastered by anything. 13*

"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"-but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. 18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

GOSPEL LESSON: *John 1:43-51 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." 44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote-Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. 47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." 48 "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." 49 Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." 50 Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." 51 He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."*

READER: Here ends the reading of God's Word.

CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

CONFESSION OF FAITH: Apostles' Creed- *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen*

Gloria Patri: Ambassador Hymnal p. 4 *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

Announcements and Prayer Concerns

PRAISE AND WORSHIP:

SERMON: THE VOICE OF GOD, 1 Samuel 3:1-10 Pastor Tom Olson *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

Today I preach about little Samuel and THE VOICE OF GOD. I want to focus today on the aspect of God speaking to Samuel.

VOICES: Many people have strong opinions about God speaking to humans. Some claim to hear from God all the time. You have known people who regularly say things like “God told me...” Other people are not that strong about it and say something like, “I really felt that God was prompting me...” Other people say something like this, “I was reading the Bible and this verse spoke to me...” Others are even more cautious and say, “This is what God says in the Bible...”

BIBLE: We know that God has spoken in many ways since the beginning of time. He spoke directly to Adam, Eve and Cain. Moses talked with God as one talks to another face to face. Many people in the Bible had God speak to them in a dream, or an angel speaks in a dream, or an angel speaks to them while they are awake. Even unbelievers, such as Pharaoh of Egypt or Kings in Babylon and Persia received dreams that needed to be interpreted by Joseph and Daniel.

TODAY: The New Testament talks about words of wisdom, words of knowledge, dream, visions, gifts of prophecy, tongues and interpretation of tongues and so on. Those things happened after Pentecost. Some people, called cessationists, believe that such miracle gifts ended some time in the first century and that God doesn't speak to people that way anymore. I have heard many testimonies about God speaking to folks in the modern world. Christians in modern Islamic Iran claim that Jesus himself came to them with the Gospel when no one else could legally go there.

TEXT: Let's look at this wonderful encounter between the little boy Samuel and God to learn about THE VOICE OF GOD, 1 Samuel 3:1-10...

I. THE WORD OF THE LORD WAS RARE IN THAT DAY

1 Samuel 3:1 The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

SILENCE: Samuel was living in a day when the voice of God was rare. It doesn't say there were not ANY visions from God but not MANY. We can have a pretty good idea why the voice of God was rare in those days. It was to a large degree due to the spiritual condition of the religious leaders and the nation as a whole. The Scriptures make this clear in the previous chapter, *1 Samuel 2:12 Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD.*

They abused their priestly office for gluttony and sexual immorality. They were a reflection of the people of that day as well. 1 Samuel 2:17 summarizes it this way: ***“This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD's sight...”***

SAMUEL: Note the difference with the little boy Samuel who was a miracle child, an answer to prayer of an elderly childless couple, and dedicated by his mother and father to the service of the Lord. ***1 Samuel 2:26 “And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men.”***

PROPHET: Little Samuel had a heart for God. People could sense it. God was raising him up to be a prophet. At this point Samuel had not had a personal encounter with God. Remember, **THE WORD OF THE LORD WAS RARE IN THOSE DAYS.** Secondly...

II. THE VOICE OF GOD WAS NOT FAMILIAR TO SAMUEL

1 Samuel 3:2-8a 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 temple 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 The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

VOICE: When Samuel heard a voice, he naturally thought it was Eli the priest calling. Nobody had taught this godly young man,

who slept near the Ark of the Covenant in the temple, to listen for the Lord to speak. That is because nobody in leadership was listening for God anymore. They had an academic and ritualistic relationship with religion but there was no personal relationship with God at that time in history. This is sadly not so uncommon.

QUESTION: How in tune is our culture to the voice of God? Are we listening for God's Spirit to speak? As we come to church, do we expect God to speak to us? Are we teaching our children to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit?

CONFIRMATION: I don't point my finger at any of you more than myself. When I meet with my two confirmation students, do I merely pump some information into their heads or, do I assist them in having a living and dynamic walk with God?

LARRY: This is why I enjoy talking to my farmer friend Larry. He includes God into his daily life all the time. He prays about almost everything he does and he looks for, listens to and expects God to intervene in his daily life. And God does! He has a fresh testimony all the time.

NORM: The same is true of Norm Haglind. We went to his 86th birthday party on Friday. When I feel like my spiritual life is dull, I go and visit Norm at his apartment. He is so fired up and alive that I get inspired. He walks with God and talks with God and it radiates all over him. I always leave those visits more alive in my relationship with the Lord. The spiritual world is so real to him and it makes a difference. He knows the voice of God.

John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

AFRAID: Some people are afraid to experience God because they are reacting to fanatical extremes they have encountered. That is understandable. There is a ditch on either side of the road, as one man once told me. For me, I believe I need to learn to hear from

the Lord much better than I do. I am all too much like Samuel when he was UNFAMILIAR WITH THE VOICE OF GOD.

III. THE TRUTH DAWNED ON ELI

I Samuel 3:8b-10 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."

ELI: The priest, Eli, had very wicked sons. But he, himself, was not so far out of touch with God that He didn't know about God speaking to men. It had been a long time since anyone had heard from God. But eventually Eli realized it was God who was speaking to Samuel. Then he told Samuel how to respond. I love this statement in verse 9 where Eli told Samuel to say this the next time he heard the voice calling his name: ***"Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening."***

TEENS: That phrase is very precious so me because when I went to teen-age Bible study group in our church growing up, that is exactly what the pastor told us to pray. We would gather in the parsonage living room and start the study in prayer. Then we would pray, ***"Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening."*** After a time, we would share with the group what we felt that God had brought to our minds. Those were some powerful times of sharing that made a great impact on my life.

CHAPLAIN: The Lutheran Evangelistic Movement once had a chaplain in the skyway system downtown Minneapolis. One day someone came into the office who was troubled. The chaplain breathed up a prayer to God and asked God what he should pray about. A strong impression came to him that he should pray for the person's feet. He felt kind of foolish at first, but as he prayed for this person's feet the individual broke down sobbing and said,

"How did you know I was suffering so greatly with my feet?" That opened the door for the chaplain to share the good news of Jesus' salvation with this business person. I will never forget that testimony from the Skyways Chaplain in the 1970's of the power of God speaking to him.

EXPECT: I think we should all come to our prayer time with great expectation that God will speak to us about our needs. We can expect the Word of God to come alive. It is my impression that God wants to be more intimate with us. This is very evident when Jesus speaks to the church in Laodicea in ***Revelation 3:20 "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."***

REGRET: I wish I had spent more time when our children were little, teaching them to be more sensitive to the voice of God. I wish I had taught them to say, ***"Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening."***

Samuel teaches us today to learn to listen to THE VOICE OF GOD. Expect the Lord to speak to you as you walk close to him. I close with the words of a well-loved old hymn.

Speak, Lord, in the stillness,
While I wait on Thee;
Hushed my heart to listen,
In expectancy.

2
Speak, O blessed Master,
In this quiet hour;
Let me see Your face, Lord,
Feel Your touch of power.

3
For the words You speak Lord,
They are life indeed;
Living bread from heaven,

Now my spirit feed!

4

All to You be yielded,
I am not my own;
Joyful, glad surrender,
To be yours alone.

5

Speak, Your servant listens,
Be not silent, Lord;
Waits my soul upon You
For your lifegiving word.

6

Fill me with the knowledge
Of Your perfect will;
All Your own good pleasure
In this child fulfill.

7

Like a watered garden,
Full of fragrance rare,
Lingering in Your presence,
Let my life appear.

*Now may the peace of God that passes all understanding guard
your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

Hymn #468 "Nearer, Still Nearer"

Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Closing Song: Chosen by Carol

Postlude: Carol Gustafson