

OUR CALLING

1 Samuel 3:1-10

The story is told of a farmer who was out in his field one day when he looked up at the summer sky and saw a most unusual cloud formation. As clear as day he saw white puffy clouds dance across the sky in the shape of a **“P” and a “C.”** The first thought that crossed his mind was that this must be some kind of mystical experience and God—the Creator of the Ends of the Earth” was telling him—calling—him to **“Preach Christ.”** Responding to that “call” he told his wife what he had seen. **...“I’m going to sell the farm and go to seminary,”** he declared enthusiastically. His wife, who was a bit more practical perhaps, or maybe skeptical replied, **“PC? What makes you think that it doesn’t mean “Preach Christ” but “Plant Corn?”**

Does God really call people to serve Him in particular ways? Who does God call, and how do they know? Could God be calling me to serve Him?

In his book, The Call, Os Guinness states,

“Deep in our hearts we all want to find and fulfill a purpose bigger than ourselves. Only such a large purpose can inspire us to heights we know we could never reach on our own. For each of us the real purpose is personal and passionate: to know what we are here to do and why.”

Discovering God's call or mission in life is a process that unfolds over time. We do not choose our calling. God calls and we respond. If you are open you can't miss His calling because He is relentless in His pursuit of you.

Our lesson from I Samuel is about being “called” by God to take on a certain responsibility. The text begins **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.**

Eli was a prophet. Samuel was kind of an apprentice in the Temple. It was a spiritually dry time in the life of the nation.

It was almost as if God had withdrawn from the people. It was more likely, though, that the people had withdrawn from the LORD.

Against this backdrop Eli was in his room lying down and Samuel was lying in a room nearby. In the night, Samuel heard a voice calling his name rather urgently. **“Samuel, Samuel”** the voice said.

Samuel thinking that Eli was calling him replied **“Here I am!”** as he ran into the old prophet’s room. **“Here I am, for you called me”** Samuel said to Eli. **“I didn’t call. Go lie down again.”**

Samuel went back to his room. No sooner had he laid down then he heard the voice again.

“Samuel! Samuel!” came the urgent voice again. Again Samuel replied “Here I am!” as he dashed to Eli’s room. “Here I am for you called me” Samuel announced as he entered Eli’s room. “I did not call you, son. Go lie down again.”

Now Samuel, the text says v7, did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

The LORD called to Samuel a third time. A third time Samuel replied and went into Eli’s room. Here I am for you called me”

Eli knew that something was up for this was so uncharacteristic of Samuel. Eli suspected that the LORD was calling the boy. So this time he counseled Samuel, “Go lie down and if you hear the voice again, say ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’”

Samuel went back to his room and the voice came to him again. “Samuel, Samuel.” “Speak, for your servant is listening.” 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.”

There are several things that I think we can learn from this little exchange.

FIRST, IT IS GOD WHO CALLS –

Samuel's mother had prayed for a child – God answered her prayer with the birth of Samuel. When Samuel was weaned, Hannah came to the place of worship and said to Eli, the priest, **I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.**" 1 Samuel 1:27-28

Hannah dedicated Samuel, she presented Samuel to the Lord, she said Samuel's whole life would be given to the Lord. **BUT HANNAH DID CALL SAMUEL.** Fast forward to chapter 3:4

Verse 4 says: **Then the Lord called Samuel.**

God Himself, the Creator of the universe, the Redeemer of all, the Sustainer of everything that is, the Sovereign over all time and eternity, is the One who initiated this call to the boy Samuel.

We are reminded by Henry Blackaby, **The Power of the Call, this call is not by the will of man, but “by the will of God.”**

Jesus told his disciples: **You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.** John 15:16

Paul wrote: **Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, Col. 1:1**

God personally calls His servants: Abraham, Moses, the prophets, the disciples, Paul, Martin Luther, John Wesley and you and I.

SECOND, WE DON'T ALWAYS UNDERSTAND GOD'S CALL.

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

We may presume that Samuel knew something about the Lord. He was no stranger to the place of worship and the things of God.

He had been ministering under the instruction of Levi at the Lord's sanctuary in Shiloh since his mother gave him to the Lord's service as a young child.

In our context we would say he cut his teeth on the back of a pew.

But the special relationship with God that Samuel was to enjoy was not yet established. He had not yet had a revelatory experience with the Lord.

THIRD, GOD WILL WORK THROUGH OTHERS TO HELP US DISCERN HIS CALL.

8 Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy.

Samuel didn't recognize the voice of the LORD, didn't *know* the LORD, until Eli interpreted the voice. Eli represented the community of faith.

Samuel needed Eli to help him discover the LORD. We need to be in a community of faith in order to understand how God is working in our lives. God created us to be in community.

We need others to help us interpret our call. We may think that we should do something, but we need others to validate sense of call.

FOURTH, GOD IS PERSISTENT IN HIS CALL.

Samuel fails at first to recognize his call; but God patiently persists until Samuel hears. Three times God called out to Samuel and Samuel didn't get it.

Then in verse 10 we read: **The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"**

The LORD came and stood there. I find this very intriguing – Samuel could see the Lord as well as hear him. I think we could say this was a revelatory experience with the Lord.

God did not give in or give up – He kept coming to Samuel – calling out his name.

God has a passionate persistence when it comes to His people. He stubbornly and tenaciously peruses us because He wants us to turn our lives over to Him and wants the best for us.

God will not quit on us.

FIFTH, GOD WILL SPEAK TO US AS WE LISTEN FOR HIM.

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."

Trapp wrote: "A hearing ear is sweet mercy." Samuel responded in a spirit of reverence, humility and obedience to the voice that called his name.

FINALLY, GOD WILL REWARD OBEDIENCE TO HIS CALL

19 The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. **20** And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD

This refers not only to the blessing God's goodness and mercy, which Samuel received throughout his life, but also the special revelations and gifts of the Spirit which the Lord imparted to him as His chosen servant.

God was with Samuel and God used Samuel.

In the movie "Simon Birch," even though he is the smallest kid in town – deep down Simon knows that he was born to do something big. Throughout the movie he is on a constant search for his destiny. God has a plan for him – a purpose for his life. In the end Simon discovers his calling as he lays down his life to save his friends.

Remember – It is God who calls us – He has a purpose and plan for every one of us. We don't always understand His call at first, but through wise counsel, His persistent voice and our listening heart we can discover and follow our calling. In the end, we will find great joy and fulfillment as we follow our calling.