



such a sense of what God wanted me to do. All of the questions that I had for months and months became answered in my quiet room next to my bed.

When we enter into quiet time we find that the silence is often pregnant with meaning. We can see before us the creative and redeeming activity of God in our life. Our task is to listen and to be open.

In first Samuel we read; *the word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.*" The setting of this passage is the sanctuary at Shiloh which served as the Israelites central location of worship. It is there that they offered sacrifice and made offerings and it's there that they kept the famed Ark of Covenant, yea that same Ark from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. It was a time that the judges before King Saul and King David. But imagine this center of religious activities they hadn't experienced a word of God. Visions of God were rare in those days. It was a time of religious ritual without experiencing the transformed power of God. People didn't expect to hear God speak to them and they had given up that God might speak or do something new.

Then enter into the characters of our first reading, Samuel a young priest in training, his mother Hannah had been buried and she had pleaded with God, prayed to God to give her a son and that if God would give her a son, to bless her with a son, she would dedicate him to the service of God. Time passed and finally she had a son, a son that she had always wanted, and she named him Samuel, *I have asked for him from the Lord*, that's what Samuel means.

This small child probably three or four at a time has been given to the care of the second character, Eli. Now at this time Eli is now old and going blind, but he mentored Samuel in service in the Shiloh sanctuary. There are times in our life when God seems like the silence, when his words rare to our ears and when we don't see the work of God in our lives. And yet, God is ready to do something new when we are ready to listen.

The boy Samuel is ministered to the Lord under Eli. During this time of spiritual malaise people are just going through the motions and it doesn't help that Eli's sons who are also serving as priests are jerks. They are actually corrupt.

But there is Samuel, every day in the sanctuary helping Eli with whatever deed he has, perhaps it's filling the oil in the lamps, or helping with the sacrifices in the offerings that were being made, or putting incense into the burning pot. Then after a long day at work falling asleep as the light becomes dim with the oil coming out of the candle of the Lord, sleeping by the Ark of Covenant. And then he hears, "*Samuel, Samuel,*" there's a tender persistence of the voice of the Lord as he speaks to Samuel. Not the fire or wind or the thunderstorm that we're used to hearing, just a whisper, "*Samuel, Samuel.*" Three times he goes to Eli and after the third time finally his master's weariness gives way to wisdom and he tells Samuel, *be still and listen.*

Professor David Ausburger has written; "*An open ear is the only believable sound of an open heart.*" Samuel is able to listen and becomes available to his Lord and that

begins his amazing journey of faith. He becomes a judge, a prophet, and an anointer of kings. Proverbs says *when there is no vision the people perish*.

It is our duty to be open to listen. To be open to the Spirit that calls and gathers and enlightens God's holy church. To be open to where God might be leading you and us together as congregation. And of course, there's vulnerability to that. Anytime there is openness to change, or openness to new direction, or openness to God's nation, but it also leads to openness to mission without restrength. Responding to the needs and touching the lives of those who are hungry and thirsty for the things of God whose lives have not heard a word of the Lord, whose eyes have grown dim to God's vision in their lives.

What will be your response? Will it be like Samuel, *Here I am!?* You're invited to listen to God and to heed the call of God who continues to speak to his people today and to respond to his invitation to be bold people of the church.

And may we join our voices with all of the saints who have gone before us who pray the classic Christian prayer;

*"Lord God, You have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out in good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.*

Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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