

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
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1 Samuel 3:1-10

God Still Comes Calling

1. *By a miracle*
2. *For a mission*

**Hymns: 82 – “Here I Am, Lord” –
Distribution: 283, 92 - 422**

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

1 Samuel 3:1-10 –

The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions. ² 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.”

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.”

One of the most miraculous things you can do is... speak! The act of forming words is indeed an amazing gift of God. Scientists estimate that to form a sound your body uses no less than 72 muscles. Just think of the way your mouth, throat, and chest must work together to make some of our consonants:

- Gutturals in the throat, such as the hard “k” and the soft “g”
- Dentals in the teeth like the hard “t” and the soft “d”
- Labials with the lips that can make a hard “p” and a soft “b”
- And then there are all the vowels, which need to be formed by contorting your mouth into different shapes: a, e, i o, u.

Speaking is indeed a miracle!

However, there is a greater miracle when it comes to speaking. It’s a miracle on which the entire Christian faith is based. It’s a miracle on which your faith depends. It is the miracle that God has spoken to us. This is not a miracle simply of God’s power, but a miracle of his mercy and grace also.

Today, as we marvel in our worship service that the Lord has called us, let’s focus on the OT reading from 1 Samuel 3, where the Lord calls to the boy Samuel in a miraculous way. Let’s also marvel that **“God Still Comes Calling!” In these verses we will learn that he comes calling:**

1. **By a miracle**
2. **For a mission**

1 – To appreciate the miracle by which God came calling Samuel on that night long ago, we must understand the situation in the nation of Israel at that time. It was quite a sad situation. In fact, when we read that God came calling Samuel at

night, it was truly “night” as far as the condition of the nation was concerned.

The period coming to an end at that time was the age of the judges. God gave the nation a chance to follow his ways on their own, without kings over them. If you’ve read the book of Judges lately, you know how things spiritually deteriorated during that time. The judges themselves were more and more corrupt as that time went on (Cf. Samson!). As the book comments, “*Everyone did as he saw fit.*”

At the time of Samuel, corruption even ran free in the priesthood and religious order. The leading priest in our story, Eli, had two sons who served as priests also. His sons stole from the offerings that people brought to God. They committed adultery with the women who served at the house of God. Unfortunately, Eli could not bring himself to discipline his sons when they did these things. We even see a small indication of the spiritual apathy in this story when we hear that the time of night God called Samuel was when “*the lamp of God had not yet gone out.*” It was clear in the laws God gave to Moses that these lamps were never supposed to be allowed to go out! **Spiritual apathy and disobedience reigned in the land!** Because of this we heard that at that time the word of the Lord was “rare” and there were “not many visions.”

Get ready for a miracle. We read, “*The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions. One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. 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.*” Perhaps you remember that Samuel was a son that the Lord had given to a believing woman named Hannah. Hannah had been childless, and had prayed earnestly to the Lord for a son: “LORD, if you will give me a son, I will

give him back to you for all the days of his life.” God answered her prayer, and Hannah kept her word. She gave her son to serve at the house of God and he served as houseboy for the high priest. He opened the doors, tended to the lights, and many other duties I’m sure we don’t specifically hear about.

We read that one night the Lord himself called to Samuel audibly. Jewish tradition tells us that Samuel was 12 years old at this time, although we don’t know with certainty. Samuel thought it was the elderly high priest calling him and ran to serve him. But since Eli had not called he sent him back to bed. Again the Lord called to Samuel, and again he ran to answer the call that he thought had come from the high priest Eli. But again Eli sent him back to bed. After this happened a third time, we read that Eli concluded that the Lord must be calling Samuel, and told him to say, “*Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.*” And so it happened. **What a miracle that God called to Samuel in this way!**

As we read this account, we’re struck by a couple details. One is the name given to the God who called Samuel. It is the “LORD,” spelled with all capital letters. That’s God’s OT Savior-name, the name used to emphasize that God has made a covenant to save his people through sending a Messiah and that nothing will deter him from that plan. This name is used no less than eleven times in the ten verses of this text.

We also notice where the initiative comes in this call. When a person is called by God, God always takes the initiative. Samuel did not go to bed that night planning that he would have an encounter with the Lord. It caught him totally by surprise. It was the same in our Gospel reading today, which recounted the calling of some of the first disciples of Christ. When Jesus called them from their fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee, they had set out for work that

morning to catch fish. Before the day was over, Jesus called them and gave them a whole new assignment.

Has God called you? Many of you might remember learning a passage in Catechism class about how God has called you. *“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”* (1 Peter 2:9) The remarkable fact here is that God has called you when you lived in “darkness.” Colossians 1 also tells us, *“He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.”*

Why would God call you? Is it because you are naturally beautiful? Is it because you have a perfect personality? Is it because you are trying hard to be a great person? Is it because you were a gifted child? Is it because of your family pedigree? Is it because you were born to royalty? Is it because you are wealthy? Is it because you are a physical specimen, with bulging muscles and fleet feet? You know it’s not so. Scripture speaks the truth when it says, *“We know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.”* We are children of darkness by nature.

A good example of the miracle that God would call us is that of an enemy. By nature, Scripture calls us children of darkness, enemies of God who disobey his righteous commands deliberately and often. Think about those whom you would count as enemies and rivals, perhaps not even of your choosing. Did you call them on the phone this past week to say “Hi”? Or did you invite them out for an appetizer at a

restaurant and some conversation? Are you going to this week? If not, why not? The reason is that we do not like to reach out to those who have been enemies to us. We don’t want to converse and socialize with them.

But God has. He graciously has called out to you in your darkness in love and grace. **What a miracle!**

2 – But there’s more. There is more, because God does not waste miracles. He always does them for a specific purpose, and the case of Samuel is no different. When God called Samuel, he had a mission in mind for him. To see what was on God’s mind, we need to read a few verses after our text. Verses 11-14 tell us, *“The LORD said to Samuel: ‘See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.’”*

The next morning Eli called Samuel and asked what the Lord had said to him. Samuel’s immediate mission was not an easy one. He had to relay to Eli what the Lord had said in judgment of the sin of Eli and the sin of his sons. Samuel had to speak honestly about God’s judgment to Eli. His family line would be cut off. God is not mocked, and his judgments would come true.

God had more missions for Samuel. We hear later in this chapter: *“The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the*

LORD. The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.” God would use Samuel as the greatest prophet of his time during a turning point in the history of Israel. The way God’s people would be ruled would change from judges to kings. Samuel would be the anointer and mentor for the first two kings of Israel: David and Saul. Samuel would continue to be a prophet who would teach the nation. Samuel would do this as the history of God’s people led toward the sending of the Messiah that God had promised to take away the sins of all people. All this pointed ahead to Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind. **God called Samuel for a great mission.**

God has not only called you by a miracle. He has also called you for a mission. What is it?

We can identify a couple things here. First, your mission – by God’s working – is to know, submit to, and broadcast the tough message that God has for you and for mankind. Just as the message of God’s law to Eli was difficult, we must believe that without God’s intervention we are truly lost in sin and creatures of condemnation. God hates sin, and he hates the sinner. Psalm 5 says, *“The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong.”*

We must also submit to the fact that our sin has cost a life. Can you imagine the guilt a person carries on their mind who has done something irresponsible that cost someone else their life? In a moment of bad decision, they did some irresponsible act that seemed harmless yet cost another human being their life. Dear friends, this is your story. Your sin has cost Jesus his life on the cross. Yet it is amazing that through that loving act, your forgiveness has been won. **This message of God’s law and gospel is one that we must tell as Samuel did!**

After recognizing that, what other “missions” do you now have that God has placed before you? You have probably not been called to mentor kings, but God has a purpose and mission for your personal life. What is it?

- To be a godly mother?
- To work hard as a productive employee in the company?
- To be a teacher?
- To be a student?
- To be a father, the spiritual leader in your home?
- To be a counselor for a troubled friend?
- To be a leader in your church, by specific office or as a supportive member?
- To plan to witness to that person that you know will probably not be hearing about Christ from others around them?
- Or, for some of you young people here today, could God be calling you to consider serving him as a pastor or teacher with your life?

As you think about all that, what is your attitude toward your mission?

- Are you tired of your station in life?
- Are you unhappy with it?
- Do you feel like complaining about it?
- Do you neglect the duties before you that God has placed there?
- Are you stubborn?
- Or young people who might be able to consider whether God could use you publicly for his kingdom, would you say “No” for no good reason?

Is there a temptation for us to say to God, “Listen, Lord, for your servant is speaking”?

If so, it is a day to repent of selfish thoughts and marvel that in Christ our Savior we have forgiveness. It is a day to recommit ourselves to whatever mission God personally has put before us in our lives and strive to fulfill it with the strength that he provides in an attitude that is humble, trusting, and ready. It is a day to say along with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

Speaking is a miracle, isn't it? And the fact that God would speak to us is a greater miracle, isn't it? Yet today we close with a prayer that God would work a miracle in us to... Listen.

God is still calling today. He is calling:

1. By a miracle

2. For a mission

May he move us to hear and heed his call. And believing in his forgiveness and grace, may we be led to say, "Here I am, Lord." Amen.