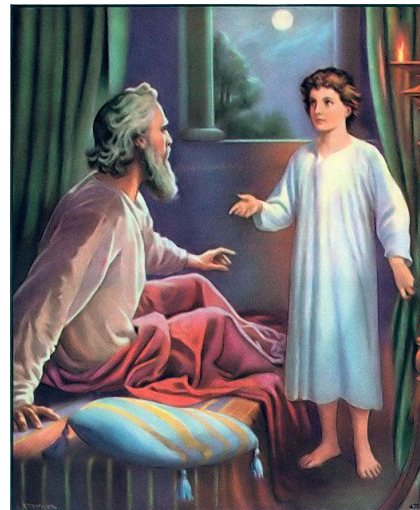


God Speaks, We Listen



God Speaks

- Phone conversation with PDW. God doesn't talk to us this way, cell phone, to guide, give advice. We don't talk to God this way (hotline to God). Doesn't work that way; maybe wish it did. But not way God communicates with people.
- Not anymore. Was time, spoke directly, not phone, but in vision or with prophetic message, speak. Christmas: Mary, Joseph – angel. Abraham – Gen, all the time. Prophets: “Word of the Lord came to;” “Lord appeared to.” Would speak directly with prophets, to share message with others. Not today. But in lesson – 1 Sam 3.
- I like lesson; young Samuel, close in age to mine. Remember story? Later becomes prophet, leader; works with Saul; eventually David. Remember where story starts? Mother Hannah unable to have children. Prayed for son; finally God heard. Samuel = God hears. Stayed home as baby; then (preschooler) dedicated him to Lord's service, tabernacle, Shiloh. Church, where worshipped, sacrifices. There raised, where grew up. There, priest Eli. Old man (**vs. 2**); eyesight failing. From lesson, might think Eli is godly man. But 2 sons: Hophni & Phinehas, priests. Steal from sacrifices, offerings; adultery with women at tab. Father Eli, almost nothing to stop it. Why **vs. 1b** – bad shape at church. Where Sam's story begins: little boy, raised at church, things in really bad shape.
- But God had plans to fix things through little boy Samuel. One night, asleep in tab, **vs. 4-5** (not phone). Cycle happens 3x. (Chuckle: same thing at my home.) Third time, Eli realized: can't just be bad dream, not just hearing things. **Vs 8b-9**. Story culminates; next, not just voice but someone standing there: **vs. 10** (courage!). Point for us: when God speaks his Word (however he chooses: through vision, in person, in Bible), expects us to pay attention. God speaks, we listen.

We Listen

- Obvious problem: don't always listen well. May not have the utter disregard for God's Word that H&P had; that's just plain unbelief. I'm talking to Christians who love Lord Jesus as our Savior (sins, heaven). In Epiphany, reveals himself to us, world through Word. Actually speaks to us – epiphany!
- Just that sometimes as Christians we don't listen carefully. “Speak... listening” becomes “Listen... speaking.” Instead of hanging on words God speaks, devouring them, living them, better at “God, need this/that.” When comes to com with Lord, greater emphasis on up than down. Not to diminish importance of prayer (Hannah prayed, God heard, Samuel = God hears). But singular focus of story, main point of this lesson: God wants us to listen to him when he speaks. God speaks, we listen.
- Since we know not through phone, let's spend time thinking about what we listen for; where; when; why we listen. What listen for? L&G – two main teachings of Bible. Law, mirror: “Yes, you actually are sinful; here's how.” Bible shows us ways we've disobeyed God, angered because of behavior. Need God's law to show us how fallen short of God's expectations, because if don't know, then don't think we need Jesus as Savior. So law makes our conscience hurt, feel ashamed, long for peace. Find that peace in Gospel, good-news messages of comfort and peace from God, that he forgives all sins through Jesus Christ. We are Christians because we believe that JC lived holy life, died on cross, rose from dead to forgive our sins, take guilt away. Christ is our Savior, because he has forgiven our sins; we will go to heaven. That truth, that message called Gospel, that resolution to message of Law, what God speaks to us. So we listen for messages of L&G. Don't listen for detailed directions for decisions we face. Sometimes faced with tricky decisions; may want God to whisper some direction in ear. Should I take job, buy house, move to place, marry person, begin treatment, make investment? All

kinds. My call to Mobridge. When it comes to those decisions, God may not give answer; instead, wisdom. Our prayer: God would bless our thinking with wisdom to make wise decision: my call, any decision faced with. Listen for messages of L&G; what God wants us to hear in his Word.

- Where? Anywhere. Too many: “Can worship anywhere; doesn’t have to be church.” True: pray. Only way to listen when God speaks is actually have Word present. Two best places: at home and church. At home: make your home a place where God’s Word is present. Do that by reading devotions with family. Best times: after supper, before bed. Read from devotional book, kids’ Bible, real Bible. Make home place where God’s Word is present. Second, at church. Come to church! Two weeks ago I preached about new year’s resolution to come to church more; won’t repeat all of that. But if question is where listen to God speak: certainly home, obviously church. Where you sing hymns, confess sins, chant liturgy, hear sermons, give offerings, take Communion, witness baptism, offer prayers. Listen to God speak in your home and at church.
- When? Not time of day but point in life? All I can say: start young. Parents, start your children hearing God’s Word young. Today’s lesson about little boy named Samuel, grew up at church, heard Word every day; grew into faithful, godly man, even prophet. Parents, your children need to hear Word from young age, from birth. Bring them to church! If squirrely, Cheerios and coloring books. But bring! Had some people ask: what led you to want to become pastor? Simple answer: came to church as little boy. Parents brought me: countless hours of sermons; years in SS; ushered; church was comfortable place to be; expected place to be (only reasons not: out of town or sick). Parents, children get more out of church than you think. And I think the church gets more pastors out of parents bringing their children to church. Something I don’t say enough from pulpit: we have young boys in church that would make excellent pastors. Think about that, moms & dads: does son show early signs of aptitude for public ministry? Encourage it, and bring to church. No matter what they grow up to become, their Christian lives will be lives of service to God, because when young, you brought them to church.
- That brings us to: why? Why listen to God of Christianity when so many other gods, philosophies, voices are speaking today? God’s Word alone saves you; doesn’t just guide, help; saves you. Voice of God is only voice that says, “Apart from JC you are lost. But JC has come to save you! Believe with your heart that JC loves you, died on cross for you, and rose from dead for you so that you could have life in heaven forever.” This voice of God saves you; what God wants you to hear.
- What God wants all people to hear. Why he spoke to Samuel. Little Samuel grew up to become great prophet; spoke God’s Word to God’s people, people like you and me. To this day, God is speaking to people like you and me; not through phone call; through his Word, Bible. God wants to talk to you through this book. God speaks, we listen. So speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.

1 Samuel 3:1-10

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. 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 house 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 A third time the LORD called, “Samuel!” 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.”