

Samuel – 21.2.21

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The Song writer Don Schutte was inspired by our Bible reading for today, 1 Samuel 3, when he wrote the song *I the Lord of Sea and Sky*.

He started the song reminding us of God's greatness and power, and how the Lord listens to our cries. Most importantly, the Lord introduces himself to us directly through the hymn saying, *I the Lord!* Very comforting and or even nerve-wracking to think that the Lord is speaking directly to us.

The Lord acknowledges that He has heard his people, and will make things right, he will bring light to the darkness engulfing his people then he asks... *who will bear my light for my people? Whom will I send?*

When we sing this hymn, we sing the chorus with all our heart.

Let us take a minute and read the chorus together.

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night, I will go Lord, If you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.

Please reflect on the promise we just made collectively, we made same promise two weeks ago when John reminded us about the importance of listening to counsel during his sermon on Moses and his father-in-law Jethro.

Let us go back to our text, 1 Samuel 3; verse 1 tells us that, "in those days the Lord did not give many messages to his people, He did not give many visions". But this night the Lord chose Samuel, a young boy of not more than 12 years to give a message. When we make ourselves available for the Lord, our age does not matter neither does what we know or do not know.

Samuel was living at a time like this, a difficult uncertain time, the Priest in charge of the Tabernacle Eli cannot see well, his eyes have become weak, his sons have become uncontrollable and he does not seem to know what to do, even when he has been warned by God. Just as our world leaders are currently struggling to see clearly and struggling to lead with wisdom amidst the growing challenges of leadership at this distressing time.

Many of us have forgotten what it means to hear from God, or even doubt if the Lord speaks. But God, amid all that perceived lack of messages from God, He called Samuel, notwithstanding that Samuel did not know the voice of the Lord. We were told in verse 7 that, "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, that is because the Lord still had not given him a message."

Three times the Lord called Samuel and he ran to his mentor and father figure Eli to say, "*You called*", when Eli realised what was happening he said to Samuel, "*Go and lie down, if someone calls out to you again, say, 'speak, Lord. I am listening.'*" And the fourth time the Lord as recorded 'Came and stood there. He called out again Samuel, Samuel, and the boy said *Speak, I am listening*, He was ready to listen to the Lord.

We like to be bearers and hearers of good news from God or from people, but it is not always good news. At these troubled times are we ready to share the Gospel with our family, friends, and neighbours, about the gracious loving God that does not love sin, He is pure, he loves us sinners but not our sins. Are we ready to share the Gospel as the Lord would want us to?

For Jesus' sake, God still speaks to us. He speaks to us day after day, year after year, so that even stubborn, selective listeners like us get the message. And when he speaks, he gets results. We see that in the case of Samuel. The fourth time the LORD called to him, he finally listened. And he kept listening even though the message God had for him was unpleasant and even though what God was calling him to do was not easy. God was calling Samuel to announce his judgment and punishment of his mentor and father figure, Eli, and his sons for their deafness, defiance, and disobedience (1 Samuel 3:11-18). Without question, it would have been easier for Samuel to just roll over and stay in bed. Humanly speaking, it might have seemed prudent for Samuel to change or modify God's message to avoid offending and angering Eli. But through his Word, God gave Samuel faith to not only listen but to boldly obey.

Let us remind ourselves of the last three sentences of the chorus of the Song I the Lord of sea and sky.

I will go Lord,

If you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

As much as the Lord wants us to act when we hear his word, we cannot serve him and each other without him leading us. It is all by His grace and when we recognise that, we will rest assured that as John 15:6 says, 'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the father in my name he may give it to you'. The Lord leads us when he sends us.

When morning came and Eli asked Samuel what the Lord said to him, Samuel being so young and never having heard from God, was afraid to tell Eli the bad news, No one wants to be a bad news bearer, especially to loved ones. Fortunately, in verses 17-18, Eli encourages him by requesting to hear every detail of the message the Lord had for him. When God speaks good news it is easy to listen however when he speaks bad news, we should still listen and humbly accept what he says to us. The ability to be truthful no matter what while serving God's people, is holding God's people in our hearts.

The Lord speaks in lots of ways, not always in an audible voice as he spoke to Samuel. Sometimes in our hearts through his word the Bible, or the Lord speaks to us through other people and sometimes through us for other people, Like Samuel, let us be attentive to hear him, or receptive when it is through other people and say, *"Speak, your servant is listening."*

Let us pray:-

Thank you, Lord, that you still speak to us.

Summon us, voice of God, with words of challenge and power, calling us to courageous discipleship and urgent witness.

Remind us to pause and listen this week to hear you, in Jesus' Name we pray.

Amen.