Listening for God's Voice

Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1-10
October 11, 2026 - Week 2 of Sermon Series: ***"A People Made Ready"***
Theme: ***"I AM LISTENING." - Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.***
Key Sentence: *A people made ready learn to quiet competing voices, recognize God's voice, and respond when God speaks.*

Scripture Reading - 1 Samuel 3:1-10 (NRSVUE)

Samuel's Calling and Prophetic Activity

1 Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in
those days; visions were not widespread. 2 At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so
that he could not see, was lying down in his room; 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!" and he said, "Here I am!" 5 and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you
called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So, he went and lay down. 6 The LORD
called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me."
But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and
the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. 8 The LORD called Samuel again, a third
time. And he got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that
the LORD was calling the boy. 9 Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you,
you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So, Samuel went and lay down in his
place. 10 Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Introduction

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, last Sunday we began our October sermon series, "A People Made Ready." Our first declaration was, "I AM ROOTED." We remembered that before God prepares us for what lies ahead, God first calls us to put our roots deeply into Jesus Christ.

Today we take the next step: "I AM LISTENING." If our roots are in Christ, then we need to learn to recognize the voice of the One in whom we are rooted.

That sounds simple, but we live surrounded by voices. News speaks. Phones speak. Social media speaks. Our schedules speak. Worry speaks. Fear speaks. Other people's expectations speak. Even our own thoughts can become so loud that we struggle to hear anything else.

So perhaps the question is not only, "Does God still speak?" The deeper question is, "Am I listening?"

In 1 Samuel 3, young Samuel hears his name during the night. He gets up and runs to Eli because he assumes Eli called him. It happens again, and again. Samuel hears the voice before he recognizes whose voice it is. This story gives us three movements for today:

First, ***God Still Calls Us***
Second, ***We Learn to Recognize God's Voice***
Third, ***Listening Means Being Ready to Respond***

First, God Still Calls Us

The first thing I notice is simple: God called Samuel. Samuel was not preaching, standing on a mountain, or doing anything dramatic. He was lying down in an ordinary place during an ordinary night. And into that ordinary moment God spoke his name.

Sometimes we expect God only in extraordinary experiences. Yet Scripture repeatedly shows God meeting people in ordinary life: while they work, travel, pray, worship, care for others, or simply go about their day.

God may speak through Scripture, through prayer, through the wisdom of another believer, through a need we cannot ignore, through a conviction that keeps returning, or through a door that opens or closes. God does not need a dramatic setting to get our attention.

Story: The Familiar Knock

Imagine an older couple who have lived in the same house for many years. One evening the husband is reading when he hears three gentle taps at the back door. He immediately gets up. His wife asks, 'How do you know who that is? You have not even opened the door.'

He smiles and says, 'That is our daughter. I know her knock.' He has heard that same knock hundreds of times. The sound is not dramatic, but relationship has made it recognizable.

Spiritual maturity can be like that. God may not always shout. Sometimes God gently calls our name. The more we live close to God, the more we begin noticing that holy knock in ordinary life.

> *"God does not need an extraordinary moment to speak; God often meets us in ordinary moments."*

Second, We Learn to Recognize God's Voice

Samuel heard the voice, but he did not understand it immediately. That should encourage us. Recognizing God's voice is something we learn. Even Samuel needed Eli to help him discern what was happening.

We also need discernment because many voices live inside us. Fear has a voice. Pride has a voice. Anger has a voice. Personal preference has a voice. Culture has a voice. So we test what we hear through Scripture, prayer, the character of Jesus Christ, and the wisdom of the Christian community.

Story: A Child Knows the Voice

Imagine a crowded room. Adults are talking. Children are playing. There is noise everywhere. Then a mother calls her child's name from across the room. Many people hear the sound, but one child turns immediately.

Why? Because that child has heard that voice again and again - at breakfast, at bedtime, in correction, in comfort, and in love. Relationship has taught the child, 'That voice belongs to someone I know.'

The same is true spiritually. The more we spend time with God in Scripture, prayer, worship, and Christian community, the more we learn the character of God's voice. God's voice may correct us, but it does not humiliate us. God's voice may challenge us, but it leads us toward the way of Jesus - toward love, truth, mercy, justice, humility, courage, and faithfulness.

> *"We recognize God's voice by growing in relationship with the God who speaks."*

This is why last week matters. "I AM ROOTED" prepares us for "I AM LISTENING." The deeper our roots grow in Christ, the better prepared we are to recognize his voice.

Third, Listening Means Being Ready to Respond

Finally, Eli tells Samuel what to say, and Samuel responds, "Speak, for your servant is listening." Notice that Samuel does not say, 'Speak, and I will decide whether I agree.' He makes himself available.

Biblical listening is more than hearing information. Listening to God means becoming willing to respond. Sometimes we ask God for guidance when what we really want is confirmation of a decision we have already made. Samuel shows us another posture: 'Speak. I am available.'

Maybe God says forgive. Maybe God says wait. Maybe God says apologize. Maybe God says serve, rest, give, welcome, trust, or let go of resentment. Listening becomes discipleship when our ears are connected to our feet.

Story: The Fire Alarm

Imagine sitting in a building when the fire alarm begins ringing. Everyone hears it. One person says, 'That is an interesting sound.' Another says, 'I wonder what kind of alarm system they installed.' Another keeps sitting.

They all heard the alarm, but hearing the sound is not the purpose of the alarm. The purpose is response: get up, pay attention, move.

In the same way, God's Word is not given merely so that we can say, 'That was an interesting sermon,' or, 'That was a beautiful passage.' God speaks because God's Word calls us somewhere.

> *"We have not finished listening when we hear God's Word; listening becomes complete when we begin responding to it."*

A Listening Church in a Noisy World

Perhaps one of the greatest gifts the church can offer today is not more noise. The world already has plenty of noise. Perhaps we can become a community that knows how to listen - to God, to Scripture, to one another, to children, to older adults, to neighbors, and to people who are hurting.

And this prepares us for Advent. Advent is a season of waiting, watching, and listening. The prophets listened for God's promise. Mary listened when the angel brought unexpected news. Joseph listened

in a dream. The shepherds listened to the angels. Before Advent asks us to wait, October is teaching us to listen.

A Practice for This Week

Last week I invited you to give God ten quiet minutes and pray, 'Jesus, root my life more deeply in you.' This week, keep those ten minutes. Open Scripture. Read slowly. Sit quietly for a few moments. Then pray Samuel's prayer:

> *"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."*

Do not begin with a long list of requests. Simply become available. Maybe nothing dramatic will happen. That is all right. Listening itself is an act of faith. We are training our hearts to become attentive to God.

Conclusion - I Am Listening

Church, remember our October journey. Last week: "I AM ROOTED. Christ is my foundation." Today: "I AM LISTENING. Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

God still calls us. We learn to recognize God's voice. And when God speaks, we become ready to respond.

So when the world becomes loud, remember Samuel. When your schedule becomes crowded, remember Samuel. When fear speaks loudly, remember Samuel. When you are uncertain about the next step, remember Samuel.

> *"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."*

Because before God sends us, God speaks. Before we become ready, we listen. A people made ready for the Lord must first become a people willing to hear the Lord.

So church, let us say it together:

> *"I AM LISTENING."*

And what is our prayer?

> *"SPEAK, LORD, FOR YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING."*

May God quiet the voices that distract us. May Christ teach us to recognize his voice. And may the Holy Spirit give us courage to respond when God calls.

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

Reference Notes

1. The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition, 1 Samuel 3:1-10.

2. Walter Brueggemann, First and Second Samuel, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990, discussion of 1 Samuel 3.

3. Robert P. Gordon, I & II Samuel: A Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986, commentary on Samuel's call.

4. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Book of Common Worship. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018, on the ministry of the Word and attentive hearing of Scripture.