

Epiphany 2 1/17/21
1 Samuel 3:1-20 B

AND SAMUEL SAID, "SPEAK, FOR YOU SERVANT HEARS."

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me," Jesus said (Jn 10:27). This morning, we see Samuel hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd and following Him.

I'm going to begin with Samuel and a little explanation of our lesson. Elkanah and his wife Hannah had no children. This troubled Hannah, so she prayed that if God gave her a son, she would give him to the Lord all the days of his life (cf. 1 Sa 1:11). When Eli saw her praying, she explained to the priest why she was praying, and he answered her, "the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to Him" (1 Sa 1:17). Hannah conceived and bore a son, she named Samuel. She kept her vow and that's why her son Samuel was assisting Eli in his priestly duties.

Our lesson says that the word of the Lord was rare because of people's itching ears that were listening to all the devil's lies. It is a sad but true fact that when people turn a deaf ear to God and ignore Him, He no longer restrains them. He allows them to go their own way, as He did with Pharaoh in Egypt and Paul writes about in the book of Romans. Very simply, when people in their sin stop listening to God, He no longer speaks His Word to them.

Our lesson also says, "Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him" (v. 7). This does not mean that Samuel was not a Christian; he was. What it means is that God not communicated with Samuel in a vision or dream yet; which He was about to, in our lesson for today, by the way.

And, I do want to address God communicating in visions and dreams. Yes, this happened in the Bible, especially the Old Testament. The reason for this is quite simple – they did not have the written word, as we do today in the Bible. God does not, and I emphasize not, communicate and make His will known to us today in visions and dreams because we have Moses and the Prophets, as Philip called the Old Testament in our lesson today, as well as the written Word of the New Testament.

I. We live in an age of technology – email, internet, smart phones, texting, zoom. It seems we are never out of touch. Yet, it seems we are out of touch with God more than ever. God speaks to us today in His Word. The problem is not God's Word, we don't want to hear it.

Which was the case with Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas. God Himself calls them "worthless men" (1 Sa 2:12). Like their dad, they were priests of God and yet they cheated; they committed adultery with the women who served at the tent of meeting; they blasphemed God. And their father Eli did nothing to restrain them or stop them.

And, so God spoke. He spoke a word of judgment,

"Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them" (vs. 11-13).

They deserved that Word of judgment. They needed to hear it. Do you know who else deserves a Word of judgment? Who needs to hear it? You do. When you take a good, honest look at the sons of Eli, you know you are looking at yourself.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life; that you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear,” your Lord Christ says to you (Mt 6:25, NIV). But, you don’t listen to Jesus. You worry and stew and fret, over earthly things. And all your worrying and stewing and fretting can’t change one single thing.

Jesus also says this to you, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” (Jn 13:34). But, your anger, your bitterness, your resentment, you’re keeping a record of wrongs prevents you from loving your neighbor.

And Paul says this, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Th 5:16-18). “Rejoice?!! Rejoice, in my life?!” You want to say to Paul, “Come live in my world, Mr. Paul, and you can tell me about rejoicing!” And, pray without ceasing?! Do you not how busy I am?

So, as it was in the days of Eli and sons, so it is with you. It’s so easy for us to look at Eli and his sons and all the people of Israel and say, “Those naughty people. I’m glad I’m not like that!” They didn’t listen to God. They allowed the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh to dictate what to believe; what to think; how to act. And, your sin, shows how much you do exactly the same thing.

God didn’t hold back His word of judgment against Eli and his sons. God doesn’t hold back His word of judgment against you. Here’s what He has to against your iniquity: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep” (v. 11).

II. The Lord’s word of judgment against you and your iniquity is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus hangs on that cross bearing all of your worry and fretting; your anger, resentment, bitterness, jealousy against your

neighbor; your ingratitude in the daily bread God had given you; all your sins and iniquities. As He hangs upon that cross, God pours out all His wrath and anger and punishment against your sin on Jesus, for Good Shepherd takes that wrath and anger and punishment for you, in your place. There, your Good Shepherd lays down His life for you. And because He did that, God forgives you all your sin.

III. Which is Good News for you, Dear Child of God. Remember I said, we allow the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh to dictate what to believe; what to think; how to act. But, in the midst of all these voices, God comes to speak to us. And He says this.

“I baptize you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. I have called you by name. You are My own child.”

“I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

“Take eat, this is My Body. Take drink, this is My Blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

God speaks to us, giving us forgiveness, life, and salvation. God speaks to us giving us the peace this world cannot give; joy that is found only in the salvation in Christ Jesus; and the strength to do all things that God allows and permits into our lives this day. And on the day He comes again to take us to Himself that we will be forever with Him in heaven, we will hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Mt 25:23).

Which is why we say with Samuel, “Speak, LORD, for your servant hears!”

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