

HEROES OF FAITH - SAMUEL
"He Heard the Lord Calling"
1 Samuel 3:1-10

INTRODUCTION ... After talking last week about Samson, a dubious hero of faith, it is much easier to talk about today's HERO OF FAITH - SAMUEL HEARD THE LORD CALLING him.

I. "Good morning! I am SAMUEL ...

"It happened when I was a young boy - maybe 10 or 12 years old ... I was living with the priest ELI at the holy place at SHILOH (this was long before we had a temple in Jerusalem) since I was about 2 years old ... why? - my mother gave me to the Lord to be His servant for all my life - because He answered my mother's prayer for a child - I was that child - I saw my parents once a year when they came to Shiloh for their annual sacrifice to the Lord ... but back to my story!

"When I was 10 or 12 years old, I was helping Eli serve the Lord ... one night Eli was sleeping in his room, and I was asleep in the holy-room (sanctuary) near the ARK of the COVENANT ... suddenly I heard someone call my name ... thinking Eli needed something (he was now old and almost blind), I ran to his room - but he hadn't called me ... so I went back to bed. It happened a 2nd time ... and a 3rd time ... finally Eli understood what was happening ... he told me that it was the Lord speaking to me ... when God called again, I should answer, 'Speak - Your servant is listening!' ... and that's what happened: I went back to bed, believing that God would speak to me - the Lord called again - I answered Him - and He gave me a message for Eli and his evil sons ... from that day on the Lord often spoke to me - messages that I should speak to other people for God ... soon God's people knew that the Lord had called me to be His prophet.

"It was not always easy to be the Lord's prophet ... that first message - I didn't want to tell Eli that God said He would punish Eli and his sons for the evil things they did while they should have been serving as His priests - but Eli told me that a prophet must always tell everything that God told him ... sometimes the messages were good news - liking showing whom God chose to be king (next week you will hear about that) ... but other times God's messages were filled with warnings because His people did not obey Him ... but I trusted the Lord - so I must do what He commanded me and speak His message."

II. Has the Lord spoken to you?

With signs or voice? - probably not! ... long ago He spoke by voice to His people often, because they did not have His written Word - though even when Samuel was young, the Lord did not speak to His people often perhaps because His priests were evil men ... now He does not often speak directly to His people - though He still can - and perhaps sometimes does. Now He has other ways to speak to us ...

The book of Hebrews says, "In the past God spoke to our ancestors many times and many ways through the prophets, BUT in these last days He has spoken to us through His Son." (1.1) Yes, Jesus is the chief way that God has spoken to His people ... Jesus - His preaching/teaching - His parables - His actions - His miracles - His death & resurrection ... Jesus' entire life & ministry is God speaking to us about His love & grace - about His salvation that He won for us by the cross & the empty tomb - about His desire that we repent and turn to Him for forgiveness & new life. Jesus' message is not new ... that was God's message to people since Adam & Eve ... that's the message God spoke to Samuel, that Samuel spoke to God's people.

That's the message we have now from God ... not with God's signs or voice ... not with Jesus standing here speaking to us ... but in this written Word of God in the Bible - the Word that we read in two lessons earlier - the Word that I am now preaching to you (and to myself, too!) ... here God is speaking to you & me, warning us about our sin and comforting us with the Good News of His forgiveness through Jesus ... this Word has all of God's power to make His will be done, just as if God Himself were standing here speaking or signing! Are we listening to Him calling out to us? ... are we paying attention? ... are we letting His Word come through our ears or eyes inside to touch our heart? ... are we responding with faith - "Speak, Lord! - Your servant is listening!"?

And consider: the Lord may be calling you to speak His Word to another person! - maybe a friend, husband or wife, son or daughter, neighbor - someone who needs to hear/see a person speaking God's warning or His comforting forgiveness. With faith answer that call: "Speak, Lord! Your servant is listening!" ... then go to deliver the message with love.