

Speak, For Your Servant Hears.

Text: 1 Sam 3:1-10

Suggested Hymns:

584LSBT458, 373, 259, 291, 515

1) Speak, For Your Servant Hears

2) The Discerning Of The Voice Of God

3) A Servant Of God Will Always Hear

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Samuel 3:1-10, ¹ *Now the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation.*

² *And it came to pass at that time, while Eli was lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, ³ and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the LORD where the ark of God was, and while Samuel was lying down, ⁴ that the LORD called Samuel. And he answered, "Here I am!"*

⁵ *So he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." And he said, "I did not call; lie down again." And he went and lay down. ⁶ Then the LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." He answered, "I did not call, my son; lie down again."*

⁷ *(Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor was the word of the LORD yet revealed to him.) ⁸ And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. So he arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you did call me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD had called the boy.*

⁹ *Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰ Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears." (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Hearing with proper attention has almost become a lost art in our day. Our attention is distracted by so many things. The information we receive we do not distil in our own minds. We move rapidly over our streets, our eyes give a quick glance at a splash of colour, a word or two upon a billboard, and the next moment we look at something else.

Our minds flit from one thing to another. We are bored with the really of worth while things in life, which should receive our eager attention. We seem to be unable to gather up the energies of the mind for purposeful hearing. That is perhaps one reason why we fail to do the kind of hearing we ought to do when in the presence of God. We fail to hear with our hearts, and do not hear to keep, and to follow when God addresses us.

It is imperative that we be once more reminded how to hear. As seen from today's Gospel lesson¹ of the four kinds of soil upon which good seed was sown, there was only one which received the seed of the Word and brought forth fruit.

Rather than come to the house of God and bring the sacrifice of fools, we should be more ready to hear, and learn to say with Samuel in the Tabernacle: *Speak, for Your servant hears*. This is our theme for today. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Speak, For Your Servant Hears

God called Samuel in the evening when the day was done and the night was beginning to cover the earth. It had been night a long time in Israel. Up until that time there was as yet little recorded revelation of God. The people waited for the open visions of God. In this way they received God's instructions and directions.

Now because of the growing wickedness God had withheld His Word; there was little of it, and it was precious. When God's Word was withheld, it became precious. Some people think that the Word of God is not so necessary in our day. Can you imagine the world without it?

Suppose there was a famine of the Word; no checking of sin and lawlessness, no correction of grievous wrongs, people would be in a world worse than the jungle.

When unbelieving Thomas Paine showed Benjamin Franklin the manuscript of *The Age of Reason*, Franklin advised him not to publish it, saying: “*The world is bad enough with the Bible; what would it be without it!*”

God’s Word a Check

The Word of the Lord is still precious in our day. Without it there would be no fear of God, no fear of God’s wrath, no fear of offending Him, and no fear of final retribution. People would be to themselves a code of morals and bring about a disastrous confusion of mutual interference. The Word of God is precious because it still holds in check, in a measure, the wickedness of people.

In the chamber of Luther in the Wartburg Castle there is a notable desk, for on that desk Luther translated the New Testament into German. On one of the walls of the room there is a place bare of plaster. It is the spot where Luther is supposed to have hurled the inkstand at the devil, whose fearful apparition he had seen. This may be but a legend. But there is no doubting of the fact that by the translation of the New Testament into the language of the people, Luther did hurl an inkstand of considerable weight at the devil and the works of wickedness.

The Only Hope

The Word of God is precious because it gives the only hope for man’s dark destiny. Today people are as sinful and as headstrong as ever to continue in the paths that lead away from God. “*The wages of sin is death.*”² This is as inevitable today as ever. The Word of God is precious because in all this darkness it is still the only lamp God has given to people to give light for the way.

For guilty people it offers mercy and grace. In trials it comforts. To the weak it gives courage. To those who leave this world it gives security. It is the one and only answer to all of the spiritual wants of man. It reveals God’s infinite love to men in spite of man’s lovelessness.

It gives to man the meaning and the purpose of the Cross of Christ, which alone can restore man to the favour of God. “*It is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.*”³

As the body takes in the daily bread and it becomes our very own, flesh of flesh and bone of our bones, our very life, so, feeding on the Word of God, our

soul takes in its power, and it becomes a part of ourselves, the life of our spiritual life. The Word of God is precious in our day.

It was precious to our armed forces at their battle stations. They were facing eternity, away from home, away from their church services, but they knew that God was close to them even there! The Word of God was very precious to them then. They were eager above all things to hear its comforts, its assurances, and its blessed promises of forgiveness. But some have already forgotten how precious it was.

Now in the busy rush of life there is so much crowding our days, filling our minds that there is precious little of the Word of God filtering through into our famished souls. We simply cannot *live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*⁴

Amid all the shouting and promoting of goods, things, and pleasures of life, Satan is always loudly peddling his wares, and the Word of God does seem like a still, small voice. Friends, remember, according to that Word and our adherence to it our eternal lot will someday be determined. Jesus says in John 12:48, *the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.* Let the Word of God be precious to you.

2. The Discerning Of The Voice Of God

The Lord called Samuel three times before Samuel discerned that the voice was the Lord's. It was Eli who informed him that the Lord was calling. Perhaps that is much of our trouble. We fail to recognise the voice of God in hearing the Word, and our impressions are soon lost.

Like Samuel, we lie down and our convictions come to nothing. When God spoke to Israel as they were gathered around the base of Mount Sinai, they feared and trembled and pleaded with Moses that he might speak to them instead of God, lest they die.

The Lord says in Isaiah 66:2, *But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.* Imagine Lazarus suddenly appearing in the hall with the five brothers of the rich man, their hypocritical grief for him forgotten, sitting arrayed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously, with some other beggar now at the gate.

You can see their faces grow pale at his sudden entrance. The glasses fall from their nervous grasp and are shattered on the pavement as Lazarus says to them: *“Your brother is in hell. He has sent me to warn you and to tell you to repent.”*

Such a visit, you think, would break down the wall of any person’s heart and bring prompt and full repentance. But Jesus who knows the heart to its depths said NO: *“If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.”*⁵ Let us recognise the voice of God when He calls to us through His Word.

Look Away from Everything and Hear Only God

God called Samuel when it was dark and the lamp of God had almost gone out. God had almost withdrawn from Israel when He gave another revelation through Samuel. God called Samuel when all the objects had become mere shadows in the darkness.

So all undertakings which would otherwise attract us must lose their importance and become a mere shadow. Then alone we shall see the things of earth in their true importance when we commune with God. They are no more than shadows. *“The good things of this world are, after all, as trifling as dust; but like dust they often rise to soil us, yes, to hide the very brightness of the heavens.”*

Let the things of earth become shadows, then you will more readily feel the personal presence of God in our hour of worship. Lift up your heart, your conscience, your emotions, and your will to God, and say with Samuel: *“Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.”* Then you will hear to believe and hear to hold.

Accept Whatever God Has to Say

Samuel did not know what God intended to reveal to him. He asked the Lord to speak even though it meant judgement upon the house of Eli. Eli’s sons were ministering in the Tabernacle, but their ministry was meaningless, mechanical, careless, and heartless. Samuel remembered every word of judgement that the Lord had spoken to him. He remembered to repeat it all courageously to Eli even though it meant his undoing.

Whenever you come to the house of God, you say in effect what Samuel said. You come to have the Lord speak to you. Accept what He says even when He threatens judgement upon you. Maybe there is a lack of sincerity in your worship, or in your prayers, or in repentance.

Say: *Speak, Lord* — even if He must smite your conscience for your slanderous tongue and your coldness and hardness of heart over against His Word and the Church. Then let there be no shallow hearing.

Let there be a message to remember, a message to repeat to yourself and fearlessly to others the Word you heard from Him. *Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears!* Remember, if you are a Christian, you will go to church. We read in John 8:47, ⁴⁷*He who is of God hears God's words.*

3. A Servant Of God Will Always Hear

When Samuel asked God to speak to him, he called himself God's servant. Samuel recognised God as his Lord and was willing to be the Lord's obedient servant in whatever He asked of him.

A devoted servant is always willing to hear and to follow his master's word. How we became God's servants, we have learned to confess in those classic words of Luther: *"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.."*

If you believe that Christ has also purchased and won you, you are His servant. As Christ's servant you try to yield to Him eager and loving obedience as the angels do in heaven. *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

But the old masters, such as selfishness, greed, lust for pleasure, are bidding again and again for your service. Their mastery is tyrannical, it enslaves miserably and repays with woe. But the mastery of Christ is easy, and His burden is light; it is a lordship of love and mercy, of grace and divine fatherly kindness.

Remember, He has purchased the complete service of every faculty of body and mind. Our service under Him ought to be a glorious privilege. Let us not be hearers of the Word only, but doers also. When faith with love asks our Lord to speak to us, then we hear Christ, because we love Him.

Hearts that hear with loving devotion will hear to remember and to live what they have heard. Life will glow with many opportunities for service in the love we have learned from Him. In Christ we become a light unto the world and a salt unto the earth.⁶ Let us hear to bear fruit.

Whenever the Lord speaks to us, let us be eager to say with open hearts and ready hands: *“Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.”* Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Luke 8:4-15

² Romans 6:23

³ Romans 1:16

⁴ Matthew 4:4

⁵ Luke 16:31

⁶ Matthew 5:13-14