

Who's Calling?  
Text: I Samuel 3:1-20  
Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church – January 17, 2021  
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Remember years ago when your phone rang and you did not know who was on the other end? It seems like forever ago. In order to figure it out, you had to actually answer your phone. In this age of technology, we now have caller ID to tell us who is calling. And we have the opportunity to make the decision, “Will we answer the phone or let it go to voicemail?” If you do not recognize the number, typically most people do not answer the call. Because if you do, especially in these days of robocalling, the call will probably be telling you about a great offer to consolidate your debt, or pay off your student loans, or my favorite, your car’s extended warranty. We have a choice to answer the incoming calls on our phones. We can answer them to see who is calling, what they want, and how we will respond. Or we can ignore the calls, let them go to voicemail (if they are really important, they will leave a message), and screen what we let into our life.

This morning’s Scripture lesson is about answering a call. Samuel has a choice to make in our lectionary text from I Samuel 3. Melissa Bane Sevier, a Presbyterian pastor and writer, has this to say to frame our discussion. “Samuel was young, living away from home and the familiar, a student/protégé. Lonely? Anxious? Bewildered? Certainly, he wasn’t used to listening for the voice of God. It doesn’t seem as though our writer would have us believe that Samuel was intentionally ignoring the call, only that his lack of experience kept him from recognizing it when it came to him. It took Eli’s wisdom—and time—to convince them both that something was at work.

And it makes me wonder: when have I missed something important? Not a cell phone call, but something deeper. When have I chosen to ignore instead of answering? When should I

have done something but have been inactive? When should I have spoken up but have been silent?

The voice is all around us. In a news story about hungry children in our state, or about people who have inadequate health care. In a new piece of information about domestic violence. In a phone call from a friend or acquaintance or relative that signals a need. In a conversation about a class or group of people who are treated unfairly. We can't answer every need with an all-out response; there isn't enough time or energy. But some needs will call out to us more than others because each one of us has different "receptors." Eli's wisdom was to keep listening with an open heart and mind, and see what happens" (From Internet. [melissabanesevier.wordpress.com/2015/01/14/ignore/](http://melissabanesevier.wordpress.com/2015/01/14/ignore/). 01/13/21).

The people of Israel are going through a difficult season. They have not heard much from the Lord, but they continue to do their work. Young Samuel has been mentored by Eli, and he has been working hard, no doubt, to learn all that he needs to in order to fulfill his obligation to the Lord. "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."

Samuel has retired for the night and is just laying there, waiting for sleep to come. After a long day of ministry, he finally has a chance to quiet himself. Samuel hears a voice calling to him. It is the Lord, but Samuel does not realize it. He does not know what to make of it. This has never happened to him before. He believes that it is Eli. And it takes awhile – 3 more calls by the Lord – before Samuel and Eli realize that it is God.

For the last ten months, we have been going through our own difficult season. But we each have had the opportunity to quiet ourselves. Some more than others. We have had a chance to refocus, assess where our priorities are, and slow down from the maddening pace.

Have you placed yourself in a position to hear a call on your life from God? Have you ever heard God's still, small voice speaking to you, beckoning you to follow and to serve in some way? Do you spend time at the close of your day reflecting, praying to the Lord that you might serve Him and answer His call? The beginning of a New Year – the downtime of pandemic. Now is a great time for you to start praying that way.

Samuel does not understand this voice that is calling to him, so he enlists the help of Eli. "Here I am," is his reply, ready to serve his mentor and friend – to help him as his eyes are weak and the effects of age are affecting him. After a few back and forths about this voice that Samuel is hearing, Eli finally understands the voice to be that of the Lord. Eli coaches Samuel on how to respond that forth time – "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Samuel listens and follows the counsel of his friend and the Lord reveals His message to Samuel. It was a blessing for Samuel to have someone in his life like Eli.

Who do you look to in your own life to provide the counsel and encouragement as you seek and discern God's call on your life? When you feel led to serve in some way, who do you turn to in order to process through the details? Your spouse? A friend? A family member? We all need Eli's in our lives to help us work through our faith journey, as we discern where we can serve the Lord and follow His ways. Who do you turn to for spiritual help and guidance?

The Lord revealed His call on Samuel's life and the life of Israel, and after Samuel received it from God, he conveyed the message to Eli, his mentor and friend. It was not great news for Eli and must have been difficult for Samuel to communicate and Eli to hear. Sometimes the truth stings, but Eli responds, "He is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes."

“The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord.” Samuel was fearfully and wonderfully made by God and was affirmed as a prophet by the Lord and by the people. And all of Samuel’s days were planned for him – and God knew him. Samuel lived out his call by the Lord and served the Lord all of his days.

How are you living out your call by God? What is ahead for you in your service to God? Friends, we are hopefully seeing the start of the light at the end of this pandemic tunnel. It has been a long road – we have been frustrated and are weary. But the end of pandemic, I pray, is in sight. What will you do to serve when we are on the other side? How will KMPC’s ministry evolve and grow in the coming months? We have learned a great deal over these last ten months. Our ministry has not only continued, but it has expanded. We have been blessed by a far reaching worship service. How does that translate to future ministry? As I have said before, I think the possibilities are endless.

Where is God calling us in our community – in this village – and across the United States? What does God want us to go post-pandemic? Now is the time to think and dream and discern. What are your ideas for reaching out? Certainly our world needs the love of Christ to be shared in these days and moving forward. How is God calling you – me – us together? Let us begin that discussion – let us begin to pray. Let us see where God takes us. To His glory. Let us pray...

Creator God, we thank You that You know us – that You have known us since before we were even born. We thank You for this example of Samuel, who although he did not understand that You were calling at first, he responded and was recognized as a prophet among his people. Place us into the position where we can hear Your call on our lives and respond in faithfulness. In Christ’s name, Amen.