

Epiphany 2 – Year B
Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY
1 Samuel 3:1-10
Pastor Paul Horn

January 18, 2009

“Speak, LORD, your servant is listening!”

The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

² One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. 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 answered, “Here I am.” ⁵ And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down.

⁶ Again the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

“My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.”

⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

⁸ The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹ So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰ The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”

Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

The book of Judges could be filmed as a mini-series for HBO. The book of Judges is filled with cold-blooded murder, suicide, prostitution, adultery, polygamy, wife-stealing, idolatry, war and drunkenness. The book of Judges ends with this statement, **“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.”** (21:25) It is no wonder, then, that 1 Samuel 3 picks up the dark days of Israel by saying, **“In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.”** And here arrives the shining example of the prophet Samuel. In chapter 3 the Holy Spirit turns off the lights, powers up the flat screen and DVD player and shows us the home video of Samuel’s childhood.

Vs1 tells us, **“The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli.”** Where did this boy Samuel come from, where did he serve and who is Eli? I’ll give you a brief overview but I would encourage you to read chapters 1 and 2 of 1 Samuel today when you get home. A woman named Hannah was married to a man named Elkanah. Hannah was a faithful believer, waiting for the promised Savior. She traveled to the tabernacle three times a year for prescribed sacrifices and festivals. (Remember that Solomon’s temple had not yet been built and would not for another 100 years.

Israelites still worshiped at the tabernacle Moses built in the desert. The tabernacle was located in Shiloh, about 20 miles north of Jerusalem.) But worship at the tabernacle was bittersweet for Hannah. She thanked the LORD with her sacrifices for his many blessings, but wept because she had no children. There was another woman who had children who made fun of Hannah because she had no children. On one occasion, while Hannah was sacrificing at the tabernacle, she stood before the tabernacle, weeping and praying to LORD that he would open her womb and give her a son. She made a promise that if the LORD would grant her a child, she would give her son to the LORD, and he would serve the LORD all the days of his life. The LORD answered her prayers, Hannah conceived, gave birth, and called her son Samuel, which means, “heard by God.”

After the boy was weaned, probably about 4 years-old, his mother brought him to the tabernacle to make a sacrifice. She presented her son Samuel to Eli, the priest who served at the tabernacle. From that day on, even as little as he was, Samuel served under the tutelage of Eli. The end of chapter 2 tells us, “**The boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men.**” (2:26) Samuel’s duties were most likely custodial; opening the doors to the tabernacle, trimming the wicks on the golden lampstand in the Holy Place, making sure that enough oil was in the lampstand to keep it burning and preparing bread for the table of Presence in the Holy Place.

This brings us to our story. Samuel was no longer a little boy, but perhaps around 12 years old. One evening Eli was sleeping where he usually slept, and Samuel was lying down in the tabernacle. Sound asleep, Samuel suddenly heard a voice, “**Samuel!**” Thinking that the aged Eli, who could barely see anymore, needed assistance he ran to Eli’s bedside. “You called me?” Eli, probably cranky from being awoken replied, “I did not call you, go and lie down.” Our text says, “**Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD; the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.**” From childhood his mother Hannah had instructed him who God was and about the promised Savior. He knew who the LORD was. The boy had not yet heard the voice of God directly. A second time Samuel was called. Again, Eli sent him back to bed. The third time, Eli finally realized that the LORD was calling. The fact that Eli did not recognize the divine call the first two times may have been an indication as to Eli’s own unfamiliarity with the word of the LORD. The fourth time the LORD himself stood before Samuel and called, “Samuel! Samuel!” The young boy repeated the words of his mentor, “**Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.**” Imagine that...the LORD’s qualification for a prophet, not someone who speaks well, but someone who is willing to listen.

When Martin Luther was a student at the University of Erfurt in Germany, he found a copy of the Bible in the school library. As he paged through the Scriptures, he happened to find this story and read it with great interest. He wished that he could be like Samuel and hear God’s voice. The great discovery of Luther’s life was that on the pages of Scripture God does speak to us as he once spoke to Samuel. (The People’s Bible: Samuel, pg.19) God makes it clear that he neither speaks to us in visions and

dreams nor through direct revelation. He does not whisper in our ear. In Hebrews 1:1,2 the writer says, **“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.”** Now that God has spoken to us through his Son Jesus, he has nothing more to say to the human race. Everything that the Old Testament prophets had prophesied came true! The law was fulfilled through Jesus. Our salvation is complete because of his death! God has given us all we need to know through the gospel. And yet...

People do not always appreciate the gospel. When God’s people neglect his Word, God often takes it from them. It is no wonder that 1Samuel 3:1 says, **“In those days the word of the LORD was rare.”** The scrolls of Moses were kept in the tabernacle, but even the priests neglected them. Shouldn’t we also admit that our Bibles and devotion books sit on our shelves, neglected? Even we, as Christians, who know that we are saved by the gospel, who know that it is the gospel alone that comforts us when we are sad, that strengthens us when we are weak, and instead of saying, “Speak, LORD, your servant is listening,” we say, “I’m too busy, be quiet. I’m doing something more important.” We make our excuses, “Reading devotion to the kids at night takes too long, then they go to bed too late,” and yet, we let them stay up for other things. “If I schedule time for devotion with my spouse we’ll miss our favorite TV show that we always watch together.” “Bible study goes too long after church. I’ll miss the start of the football game or NASCAR race, and beside, we made plans. Speak to me in church, LORD, that’ll be good for the week.”

That hurts, doesn’t it? It hurts me, too. That’s the feeling of the Lord speaking to us through his Word, allowing the accusing finger of his law to point out our sins, judging us, condemning us for faithless use of his Word, for our laziness with the gospel. He must remind us of our guilt. He must remind us that he ought to slam his gavel down and announce our guilty status. This causes us to acknowledge our sin, to repent, seek forgiveness, and plead for his mercy for the sake of his Son Jesus, and say, “Speak, LORD, your servant is listening.” The Father then speaks kindly to us through his Word and acquits us.

I recently finished reading John Grisham’s 2006 non-fiction novel entitled *The Innocent Man*. Two men, Ron Williamson and Dennis Fritz, were both wrongly convicted of murder, and after 11 years on death row, DNA tests acquitted the two men, and they were declared not guilty. How do you think those two men felt after over 11 years in prison, now free!

For us, the evidence is clear. We are guilty. We have neglected God’s Word. However, despite the evidence against us, God declares us innocent. In our second lesson this morning from 2Thessalonians the apostle Paul writes that **God chose you to be saved, he chose you to saving faith through the gospel.** The gospel is the good news of Jesus, who took the guilt of your sins on himself, for all the times you and I have been unfaithful to the Word, the Father rapped down his gavel and declared his

Son guilty, caused him to sit on death row in your place, the innocent God-man, sentenced to die for our sins.

The Father declares you to be innocent not only because his Son took your guilt on himself, but also because of his innocence in his life. We see Jesus' faithfulness to his Father's Word even as a 12-year old child, in the temple sitting with the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Jesus was never too busy for his Father's Word. Because of his Son's innocence, no sin was found in him, you and I are clothed with Jesus' perfect life through baptism. The Father has to declare us innocent because of what his Son did for you and me and given to us through the washing with water and the Word.

The Father makes his court room announcement to you personally through his Son's holy supper. Jesus invites you to take and eat and drink, to be reassured that the court room decision of innocence is yours, through his body and blood. You have been set free from your sins. You are an innocent child of God.

With the humble, child-like faith of Samuel, you and I will gladly say, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." We will make time to give our Lord the opportunity to speak to us through his Word in worship, in Bible study at church, through devotions at home with our families, in private study of his Word, and before we sit down with his life-giving Word we will pray, "Speak to me, Lord, for your servant is listening." We will be eager to listen to everything that our Lord says to us, because it is his Word, and it is powerful. It comforts us when we are sad. It strengthens us when we are weak. It reassures us that Jesus always loves us when we feel that no one loves us. It gives us hope when we are hopeless. It satisfies our hunger and quenches our thirst. It fills the void in our empty lives. Speak to us Lord, because...

...because America today sounds just like the book of Judges, the Word of the Lord seems rare, most people have as their theme, "Everyone does as he sees fit." Lord, may your Word be common on our hearts and lips. Lord, give us the attitude of Samuel. Open our hearts to always be receptive to your Word. Speak to us Lord, we are listening. Amen.

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Please keep in your prayers this week...

All the unchurched who do not know Jesus as their Savior that we may bring them the saving message of Jesus; **National Pastors Aniedi Udo, Justin Udo, Okon Umanah, and Eme Umoessien of Christ the King Lutheran Church of Nigeria** and their families; **Pastor Mike Borgwardt** as he serves **Crossroads Lutheran Church, in and around Chicago, Illinois**; **Larry Hurley, Jared Sunsdahl and Michael Hefti** who are serving in the military overseas; **our members** who continue to invite their friends to our mission congregation to hear God's saving Word; **Sherry Jensen** who is at Pewee Valley; that the Lord will bless our outreach efforts and lead many unchurched people to seek Him at this congregation; **for our building project**; those

who have not been with us for some time.

Thank you to.... our guests who came to worship the Lord Jesus with us (join us again soon!); our organist [Louise Skinner](#); and all who served this week.

This Week at Faith...

Today	Voters' meeting Women of Faith meeting
Sun-Tues	Pastor Horn will be at Pastors' conference in Chicago
Monday	No Bible Information Class
Tuesday	Outreach calls.....6:30pm
Wednesday	Women's Bible Study:10am Youth Catechism.....5 pm
Next Sunday	Worship10 am Sunday School & Bible Study.....11:20am

Last week's numbers in response to God's amazing grace

Sunday worship: 63
Bible information class: 2
Wed morning Bible study: 4

Serving our Lord next week (Jan 25**)**

Food: Wells
Flowers: no one is signed up
Cleaning: Wittmeier
Acolyte: Kristen Moreland
Usher/offering counters: **Dean Moreland**

Game night

The fellowship committee will be hosting a game night at church on Friday, February 6th. For more information see Pat Hogan

Chili Cook-off

Our annual Faith Lutheran Chili Cook-off will be held on February 22nd. There will be two categories: hot and mild

Parenting Seminar

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans awarded a \$2000 outreach grant to Faith Lutheran Church to assist an outreach project: a parenting seminar entitled "Parenting with Love and Logic" will be held on February 21st, 2009. Our guest presenter, Aaron Bauer, is a teacher and principal from Milwaukee, WI. The seminar fee will include lunch, a workbook, babysitting and help offset the cost of the presenter. The seminar will run from 10am-3pm. Registration information will be in the newsletter and upcoming bulletins.

Once-a-month outreach

If you would like to get involved with reaching out to our prospects but have a limited amount of time, the outreach committee is setting aside the last weekend of every month to hand deliver a select number of newsletters to prospects' homes. Members will go in pairs, you will not go alone. Training will be provided by Pastor Horn. Speak to Kay Reynolds, Julie Dvorak or Pastor Horn if interested. The first weekend will be Feb 21-22nd.

Small group in-home Bible studies

In response to comments made at the *Faith Builds the Future* cottage meetings, the fellowship committee will be offering two in home small group Bible studies on Friday, February 27th. Pastor & Becky Horn and Pat & Lynne Hogan will be our first hosts. These in-home Bible studies are designed to offer spiritual growth and fellowship. Sign up sheets will be posted soon.

New Sunday morning Adult Bible Class
"Christian Citizenship in Church and State"
Begins January 25!