

"The Leaders God Desires"

1 Samuel 3:1-21

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SAMUEL BEARING WITNESS TO INJUSTICE

Background

Samuel appears throughout the account of the sins of Eli's house, bearing witness to their injustice and abuse. As a tender child, he presents a contrast to the hardened adults leading the House of God. After the visit from the man of God, it is time for Samuel to step forward as a leader - but what qualities must he cultivate in order to lead well? What does God desire of His leaders? Find out this Sunday as we listen to the third installment of our series, "Samuel: Bearing Witness to Injustice".

Sermon Text: *1 Samuel 3:1-21 (NIV)*

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

²One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. ³The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. ⁴Then 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 A third time the Lord called, "Samuel!" 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."

¹¹ And the Lord said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. ¹² At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. ¹³ For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God,^[a] and he failed to restrain them. ¹⁴ Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'"

¹⁵ Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the Lord. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, ¹⁶ but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son."

Samuel answered, "Here I am."

¹⁷ "What was it he said to you?" Eli asked. "Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you." ¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, "He is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes."

¹⁹ The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. ²¹ The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?
- What is the best thing you heard on Sunday?

2. Sunday Questions:

1. Childlikeness is a prerequisite for God's Kingdom. Eugene refers to the particular traits of "childlike listening" "capabilities: "willingness of children to invite the unexpected; their willingness to engage the unknown in new ways; and their courage, unbridled by the fear of failure or disappointment, to reach up and out and to expect a response." Which part(s) of the childlike traits would you like to emulate?
2. *"The boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with people."* If you grew up in a Christian family, can you share your experience of growing up? If you have children in your family, can you share how you help your children grow in the Lord?
3. Eli helped Samuel how to listen to God: taking time to be available to listen to Him; giving God the opportunity to say what He has to say; recognizing and discerning what God says; finally, being humble to receive His words. What experiences can you share about your communication with God?
4. Samuel's story illustrates that God desires God's people to listen to His voice. Eugene quotes from I Peter 2:9, to say that each of us being called members "of a royal priesthood," are all children of His family, brothers and sisters to Jesus, called to declare the praises of our God. Like Jesus, how are we invited into the privilege of learning to listen to God's voice?
5. Ultimately, only God can dig out ears for us to help us learn to listen. How can we be a listening community that can be antidote to the Hophni's and Phineas' of this world?