

*Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. 2At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; 3the 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. 4Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" 5and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. 6The Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." 7Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. 8The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. 9Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."*

*11Then the Lord said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. 12On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. 14Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever." 15Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. 16But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." 17Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." 18So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him."*

*19As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. 20And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.*

The word of the Lord was rare in those days. God was not talking. Off hand I cannot think of other places in the scriptures where something like that is said. The Word of the Lord was rare in those days.

All across the land there were shrines – holy places – places of worship. Lots of words were being spoken about God, to God. Yet we read, "The Word of the Lord was rare in those days."

Then, in the night, the Lord called, "Samuel, Samuel." But Samuel was not expecting to be addressed by God. He was but a young boy, lent to the Lord for all of his life by his mother, Hannah. You see, she had wanted a child, pleaded for a child, but year after year her cries to God were in vain. Then she made a vow that if the Lord would give her a child her child would be dedicated to the Lord. The Lord heard her prayer and gave her a son. As soon as this child, Samuel, was weaned she took him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh where Eli and his sons were priests. And there Samuel lived and served in the house of the Lord.

So when he heard his name being called in the night he thought it was Eli calling. “Here am I,” he answered and ran to Eli. “Here am I for you called me.” But Eli said, “I did not call, my son, lie down again.”

Twice more it happened – the hearing his name being called, the running to Eli, the being sent back but the final time with these instructions, “Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’”

“Samuel, Samuel” the Lord called once more.

“Speak for your servant is listening,” Samuel answered.

And then the Lord told Samuel that the Lord was about to punish the house of Eli forever.

The Lord told Samuel that the Lord would punish Eli and all his descendents because Eli did not punish his sons for their sins. Samuel told Eli that there was no sacrifice or offering that would change the Lord’s mind, the Lord would carry out the punishment.

What a terrible thing to have to tell someone – You and your sons will be punished. Samuel was afraid to tell Eli. But Eli demanded and Samuel told him

Will you be Samuel? Will you say, “Here am I Lord, speak for your servant listens.”

Will you who have been mentors call the young person who chose you to be her guide, his guide, in Christ? Will you ask how things are going – will you listen carefully – will you be the very ears of God in your listening, the heart of God in your caring, the word of God in your speaking?

Will you who visit in nursing homes say, “Here am I Lord, speak for your servant listens.” Will you listen to the stories, the complaints, the fears and the hopes of those who have come to the time in life we all fear? Will you be the heart of God in your loving, the ears of God in your listening, the arms of God in your embracing?

Will you who are parents say, “Here am I Lord, speak for your servant listens”? Will you teach your children about Jesus? Will you open the scriptures with your children, pray with your children, sing the praises of God with your children?

Will you who go to work say, “Here am I Lord, speak for your servant listens”? Will you be the peace of God in your places of work, the ears of God in your listening, telling of the forgiveness of God in your forgiving, the guidance of God in your talking?

Will you who go to school say, “Here am I, Lord, speak for your servant listens”? Will you be the love of God for the outsider? The mercy of God for the troubled ones? The ears of God in your listening?

When you all listen to what God speaks then you will carry God’s word into every place where it needs to be heard.

Long ago God chose a young boy named Samuel.

Today God is choosing you.