

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
July 29, 2018

Samuel — Man of Faith
1 Samuel 3:10-13

3:10 And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."

3:11 Then the LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.

3:12 On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end.

3:13 And I declare to 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.

Last week, I talked about Samuel's mother, Hannah. She fought in prayers and won. Therefore, she was a prayer warrior as well as a warrior of faith. Today, I am going to talk about her son, Samuel.

Hannah dedicated Samuel, who was given by prayer, to God and he was adopted to Priest Eli, and eventually became a priest. At the same time, Samuel became a prophet who delivered God's message to His people. Samuel was a "warrior of faith" who fought for God's people both in prayers and His word.

1. Samuel Listened to the Word of God

Today's Scripture describes Samuel when he was a boy. Flavius Josephus, who wrote a history of Jews, stated that Samuel was 12 years old according to lore, but the Bible does not mention exactly

how old he was.

In 1 Samuel 3:3, it says, “Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD” and Eli was in his room. “Lying down in the temple of the Lord” does not mean Samuel placed his bed in the temple. “The house of the Lord” or “the Temple” is where God resides and even priests cannot make it as their house.

However, the Bible teaches us that God lets those who believe in Jesus Christ dwell in His temple, even He makes them a part of the temple. Jesus said that his body was a temple. If so, those who believe in Jesus Christ are “in Christ,” therefore, they are in his temple. At the same time, by becoming a part of Christ’s body, they become a part of the temple. As 1 Peter 2:5 says, “You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

Revelation 21:3-4 says, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes". “The dwelling place of God” refers to the temple. David said in Psalm 23, “I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” This word is now achieved by Jesus Christ and will be accomplished in a visible manner.

“To dwell in the temple of the Lord” means to live in His Presence and this is a sincere hope for all the believers. Boy Samuel had a privilege to serve for God in the temple in a day and to lie down in His place at night. Well, the reason why Samuel was “lying down in the temple” is perhaps to keep candle lights throughout the night. We don’t know whether this happened every night or in a special

occasion, but this became an unforgettable evening for Samuel.

It is because Samuel directly heard God's voice for the first time. He heard "Samuel, Samuel" as if it was whispering in his ear. Samuel immediately work up and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But Eli said "I did not call; lie down again." (verse 5). Same thing happened second and third time (verse 6, 8). On the third time, Eli realized that the Lord called Samuel. Then, he said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.'" (verse 9)

On the fourth time, Samuel said as was told by Eli, "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears" and listened God about what would happen to Israel. That was a judging prophecy that Eli and his two sons would die within a day. Eli's sons were rough and they lost their footings as a priest but Eli did not admonish them. That's way the duty of the priest was handed over to Samuel, however, it was a heartbreaking for him to hear about the prophecy. Samuel had to experience the severe reality of the work of "prophet" from the first day he was given a prophecy. "Prophecy" is not only intended to please people. Whether it is welcomed by people or not, a prophet has to faithfully tell the God's word.

Even though priest Eli finished his life in despair, he encouraged Samuel's mother and taught the most important thing to Samuel. Therefore, I think he did what he had to do and left this world. Samuel remembered what Eli taught him, "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears", and he served for God as a warrior of faith.

2. Importance of Listening

“Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.” This word teaches the “Importance of Listening”.

Everyone wants to listen to their stories. Most burdens of the heart will be lighter if you were heard by someone who listen attentively to you, and you find a clue to the solution for your problem. However, it is difficult to find a good listener. When you consult somebody, you might have experience such as, not listening your story well, jump to conclusion, not understanding, kept talking without pausing for breath instead of listen to you. Even a table talk, if somebody comes and cut the conversation interrupt a topic, you might be awkward.

You may intend to try not to let other people be disgusting, but against your expectation, you also do the same thing and make other people feel bad. We really need to have the “listening heart” to others, and to acquire a “listening techniques” if possible. Although, it said “techniques,” better not to get the skills without your heart. Since there is a rule for communication between person and person, I think it is good to know the communication skills if you have “listening heart.”

The Bible teaches that “let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak.” (James 1: 19) Somebody said, “Although God gave only one mouth, two ears were given to us, because hearing is twice as much speaking, speaking as half as hearing.” But in many cases, we are “slow to listen, early to talk.” We are talking twice listening and listening half talking.

And you may be doing the same to God. Even though we do not say all the time such as, “Today is hot,” “I hate the person's attitude”

and “How do I do today's work,” We are continuing to “talk” in our mind. I think that most of us do not have time to stop talking and “listening” to God. There is an application for a cell phone called “Sound Meter.” The graphical needle points the level of noise. If our mind has the same one, the needle always show the top level of noise.

The time of reading the Bible and praying is called "QT." It is not an abbreviation for "Quick Trip." It stands for “Quiet Time.” In Japanese, “*seishi no toki*.” It is time to stop talking and focus on listening. By observing this time, we receive training in “listening” to God. People who can listen to God would be able to listen to other people as well.

By the word of God, to be precise, our soul is lived and supported by “listening” to the word of God. So, we should go to God and say “Speak, Lord, for your servant hears” that is the fundamentals of the foundation of faith.

3. Attitude of Listening

Secondly, “Speak, for your servant hears.” Secondary, This word teaches us about our attitude of listening.

David Augusberger wrote a book about listening to people titled, “Caring Enough to Hear and be Heard.” It is an easy reading and practical book. It is written about listening to each other as in the title of the book. Listening to each other is not only applicable for between a person and a person, but God and another person. If we listen to God, God will listen to us again. We listen to God's thoughts through the Bible and God listens to our thoughts through our prayer. There is also a chapter in the book, “listening in the same footing.” God does

not only speak to us from above, from a high place, but He also comes down to us in order to listen to each other.

But do not take it for granted because God comes down to us because of his grace and mercy, We must humble ourselves when you listen to God. When we can't understand the Bible, we ask a question such as "Why is this written in the Bible? I don't understand it." We often read the Bible with preconceived notions that the Bible should contain the articles only be understandable and acceptable by human reason. When we stand on the Bible, we say that the Bible should be like this unconsciously. Because of our preconceived notion that "everything should be done for the happiness of man," we do not think about the meaning of God's judgment and we resent it and skip it. It is because we overlook the biblical premise that "everything is for God's glory."

In order to read the Bible correctly, let us stand under the Word of God as servants of God. When we "stand" "under" the Word of God, we finally "under-stand" the Word of God. Got it?

There was a place that stuck out from the wall of the chapel in an old church. It was called the pulpit, and the preacher climbed up the stairs and entered there and preached from a high place. A lot of people were able to hear the voice of preachers when there were no microphones or loud speakers in those days. But at the same time, the listening to the words spoken above was a symbol of listening to the Word of God. No matter who the preacher is, and as long as the person speaks the Bible correctly as the Word of God based on the sound doctrine, I think we should not forget the importance of listening to the perching as a word from God as we stand under it.

“Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.” Samuel listened to the Word of God throughout his life and followed it. And he asked his people to do the same. When King Saul did not obey the word of God, Samuel admonished Saul and said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.” (1 Samuel 15:22). God has asked us to listen to His word and obey it above everything. We, too, would like to be the man and woman of the faith that hears and obeys the word.

(Prayer)

Lord God, Thank you for teaching us about the importance and attitude of listening to the Word of God. We seek the deeper fellowship with You by listening to You by the Word and talking to You through our prayer. Our first step is listening to Your word humbly. Today we take that first. When we notice that we are away from the way of the fellowship with You, please guide us to the repentance and help us to return the right way. We pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.