

# Sunday's Sermon

## GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH

250 Fox Hill Road ■ Hampton, Virginia 23669

January 14, 2018

The Rev. Dr. Phyllis B. Milton

*“Speak, for Your Servant is Listening!”*

1 Samuel 3:1-10

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May God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord, give you grace, mercy and peace. Amen.

***“Speak, for Your Servant is Listening!”***

These six words cradle the story in our Hebrew scriptures today. Words that would signal a willing heart, words that would culminate a mother's devotion, words that would usher the presence of God back into the lives of His people.

***“Speak, for Your Servant is Listening!”***

These six words paint a picture of relief, a picture of hope, a picture of rescue. Help is on the way.

Help in this instance came from someone who had no clue about anything. That unsuspecting someone was a boy named Samuel. Unbeknownst to Samuel, his mother had pre-arranged his life. If you remember, Hannah, his mom, could not have children, so she prayed to God for help.

Hannah told God that she needed a child.

Now Hannah didn't pray in general terms, she was quite specific and to the point. Hannah wanted a boy and not only that, if God would give her a boy, then she would give him back to God, to be of service to God all the days of her boy's life.

Hannah became pregnant, had a baby and surprise, surprise, it was a boy. She named him Samuel, which means “asked of God,” and when Samuel could handle food other than his mother's milk, she took him back to the place where it all began, the Temple. That was where she made her promise, and now she comes to keep her word, to hold up her part of the agreement. She gives her

only child, her boy, back to God so that God can use Samuel as long as Samuel will live.

Singer and Songwriter Johnathan Rundman, one of our musical guests at a recent Power in the Spirit gathering, wrote the following about this unique call:

***“Hey, Hey, Samuel, can you hear me,  
Can you hear me now?  
I am calling you to follow,  
I will show you how.”***

Our scriptures for today all have one thing in common, the focus on “call.” All of us would probably agree that the story about Samuel and others like it; the call of Moses, the call of Paul and even the call of Mary, are unique callings of individuals for a specific purpose, but there are other types of call that are present.

In our epistle, Paul reminds the Corinthians and he reminds us, that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are called to live a life that represents Christ to others, a call that encourages us to live a life that builds up the body of Christ, a call that has everything to do with our baptismal promise to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.

And in our New Testament reading, we see the invitation to discipleship come from “God in-the-flesh,” Jesus Himself, and this call is issued to Nathanael, person-to-person.

During our pericope study, we learned that these call stories have something else in common. And that common denominator was someone to help in the discerning of the voice of God for that individual. Samuel had Eli, and Paul had Ananias, and Nathanael had Phillip.

As Lutherans, we are familiar with this thing we define as “community discernment.” In fact, our process of candidacy for ministry is based on it.

Who helped you to hear the voice of God and to know He was calling you. Who helped you to “come and see” the “good gift” that God gives us in Christ. Who helped you to be able to say, ***“Speak, for Your Servant is Listening!”***

For me, that person was Pastor Jim Nichols. He helped me hear God’s call in my own life, and the congregation of Reformation Lutheran Church provided the community discernment and allowed me to put into practice my call, the leading of God that I was hearing and sensing in my own life.

***“Hey, Hey, Samuel, can you hear me,***

***Can you hear me now?  
I am calling you to follow,  
I will show you how.”***

You can substitute Samuel’s name with the name of Paul, the name of Nathanael, the name of our church, Gloria Dei, or even your own name. The point, is that God is continuing to call. He calls the baptized, He calls congregations and He calls individuals, and for some like Samuel, God calls for a specific purpose.

So how do we move from hearing God’s call to responding to God’s call? Let’s take another look at Samuel’s story.

When Eli properly instructed Samuel to answer the Voice by saying **“Speak, for Your Servant is Listening,”** he included two very important words in that response, servant and listening. Samuel might not have known the importance of those two words, but Eli did.

The Israelites were God’s covenant people. They would often be reminded of their salvation from Egyptian captivity, the right that God had to claim them as His own, and to whom their allegiance rightfully belonged. So, Samuel, acknowledging that he was God’s servant, was right on point.

And to listen, really listen to the voice of God has more to do with one’s heart, than the two appendages on the side of one’s head. To listen is to be able to hear the message delivered and to know that it is important and demands all of one’s attention.

Like Samuel, if we are so busy going about our daily tasks, we may not recognize God’s voice, for it is only when we are still, that we even hear God trying to get our attention, calling us to be all that we were created to be.

So, when you go home today, and you sense that God may be calling you, and there is no “Eli” or “Phillip” or “Ananias” around to help you out, let’s practice what you need to say. Please repeat after me:

***“Speak, / for Your Servant / is Listening!”***

Amen.