

1 Samuel 3 Walking with God – Series – The Life of Sam WWC 03.19.23

Good morning. The Lord bless you and give you peace. We are spending a little bit of time doing a biographical sketch on the prophet Samuel. Just to get our minds moving in the right direction, I want you to think about movies and books that have grabbed your attention and surprised you at the end. Can you think about one of those that absolutely surprised you at the very end and then you can't stop thinking about all the details that were pointing to that in the telling of the story? People are amazing who have the ability to introduce their audience to multiple themes and then turn their audience at the end to see how the multiple themes are actually all connected to some major theme. The storylines in scripture are actually exactly like that.

Unlike many of the prophets in the Old Testament, and even people in the New Testament, we have some considerable information of the early years of Samuel and can see much of the texture of the culture of his day, but we also see how careful the scripture is to underscore that information that is pertinent to the **main theme of the Bible, which is of course that God is present and working in this world through specific means**. 1st Samuel chapters 2 and 3 outlines a very present God in the life and ministry of Samuel, even from a very young age. The main goal of this message, then, is to help you see how this theme envelops the story and prepares us for the historical content of the following chapters.

Let me begin by first highlighting the theological significance of God's real and present work so that we can be better prepared to find it when we read the text.

.I. The theology of a real and present God.

Ultimately, we are considering that God displays His work through Jesus Christ, and through Jesus Christ God promises to consummate all the promises of His plan of deliverance from the brokenness present in every human being. That brokenness is sin, and the consequence of that brokenness is eternal life in judgment apart from God, but the free gift of God is that He has provided a means through which we can be rescued and given hope. There are many sub themes in scripture, but everything really touches this reality, that mankind needs God, and only God can fix what is needed in mankind to bring mankind to Himself. To know the Father and the one whom the Father has sent, says Jesus in **John 17**, is to have eternal life.

How is this seen in Samuel just from what we learned last week and learned in

our reading this morning? Well, follow this thinking. God being God is free to extend His grace in salvation or not, yet His very God-ness being what it is demands that He give voice to His character which demands an extension of His mercy and grace. We should not be surprised that God promised Himself in mercy when Adam and Eve fell into sin. We should also not be surprised that the greatest expression of mercy is not that someone of His heavenly creation be delegated to pay the penalty of sin, but that He would require it of Himself. If it is His justice that is moved to bring mediation for sin, it is His mercy that moves Him to satisfy the debt of sin. This, I believe is part of what Paul intends for us to see of the person of God in [Ephesians 2](#). But we are speaking here of Samuel, and I am suggesting that the way the scriptures introduce this man in his youth actually highlights the greater point of how Samuel is connected with a greater story, the story of God preparing the world for the Prophet who is unlike any prophet the world could ever have, for the judge who is unlike any judge the world could have, for a priest who is unlike any priest the world could ever have, and then ultimately, unlike any king the world could ever have. We then see how those who are seeking God, like Samuel, are displayed for us in scripture to consider how we reflect a disposition of desire and service to that greater theme of knowing God through God's means for eternal life.

Let's peck away at this story then, first by looking at the implications of faithfulness and unfaithfulness surrounding the characters in this narrative.

.II. The implications of Faithfulness and Faithlessness. Hannah's faithfulness, Elkanah's faithfulness, and Samuel's faithfulness are all presented here. Obviously, in chapters 2 and 3, Samuel's faithfulness even as a young man is contrasted to Eli's unfaithfulness, and the unfaithfulness of Eli's sons. We also see a contrast in chapter 2 of an unnamed prophet who calls Eli out for being a poor stewarding his responsibility as a father, a priest, and a judge. But how is Samuel's faithfulness distinguished and contrasted with Eli's unfaithfulness? Well, as we read the story, we see that Samuel tells Eli everything that God told him to do. We see as well that Samuel is in the places where he was called to serve as a priest helping Eli. Eli on the other hand ignored the problems with his sons' sinful actions ministering to God's people which simply gave those men license to press into their sinful desires, which ultimately resulted in the death of the two boys and the death of Eli, and a curse upon Eli's family as judgement for that sin.

Here then we find **two principles to live by in the Christian life. First to remember that faithful service for God's Kingdom is never forgotten by the Lord and will always be rewarded.** Remember what Jesus says so many

years later, **Luke 18:28–30 (ESV): “28 And Peter said, “See, we have left our homes and followed you.” 29 And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”** Faithful service for God’s Kingdom is never forgotten by the Lord and will always be rewarded.

And here is the **second principle, God does not ignore our sin**. If we will not repent and turn away from it, He will judge us. Now the Christian need be careful here. We often think that we are okay because we are under grace, but even that thinking displays an immaturity. We should remember that the discipline of the Lord, though it is discipline as a Father for those who are in Christ, is still discipline none the less. The loss that we incur for our sin is not negligible because we get to heaven. Notice what John says in his second epistle, **2 John 8 (ESV): 8 Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward**. And Hebrews warns us of not fleeing the chastening of the Lord as Christians. Why would we seek to get out from under the chastening of the Lord? We would seek it because it hurts, because it is hard! Let us all hear this, **sin will always affect more people than we think it will, it is always more repugnant than we think it is, and it will always move God to rebuke us**. What we sow we will also reap. So, I would pause here for a moment, even within this message. Would you quietly ask God right now to bring to mind, if He has not done so already, those sinful things that are hindering your Christian life, or those things that are keeping you from embracing Jesus Christ as the salvation for your sins? And then ask God to help you follow Him as He desires by giving those things up?

Let’s continue in our meditation on Samuel’s life by considering the same phrase the author uses to move the reader of this book to consider how the content is related.

.III. Literary helps. Immediately after this the author records the prayer and praise that Hannah, Samuel’s mother, gives to God, the author finishes that section with **verse 11** which says, **“And the boy ministered to the LORD in the presence of Eli the priest.”** Now notice **3:11**, **“Now the young man Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli.”** What had to happen for Samuel to fulfill this work? Well, Hannah gave her only son to God that he might serve the Lord in all that was necessary for God’s people to worship God. Does that sound familiar? A thousand years later a man named John records this statement in reflection on the person of Jesus Christ, **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”** That is found in John 3:16.

Just two points of application from this, and here it is. People that see the scriptures as diminutive towards women are not reading the scriptures correctly. The honor that Jesus gives women in the New Testament is not new to the New Testament. Hannah reflects in miniature form the character and nature that God would one day display in a way that would change the world. There is no higher honor that can be given but to be recognized as reflecting in an exemplary way the very character and person of God.

From the theology of a present God to the implications of faithfulness and faithlessness, to literary helps, we conclude with this, learning where to hear the voice of God and discern his direction.

.IV. Where to find God and Discern His Direction. This point is primarily taken from chapter 3 and considers the experience Samuel had of hearing the voice of God. The chapter recounts this event where Eli is now old and almost blind. The time is mentioned as being before the lamp of God had gone out. Commentators note that this is the golden lampstand, found in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle, that is just outside of the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was. The lamp would be lit at twilight and burn until dawn.

The pictures here are quite informing. **First**, if it was close to dawn, we can imagine why Eli and Samuel seem to have this odd interchange. They'd been sleeping. I remember the experiences Marjorie and I had with our kids when they were really little but big enough to stumble out of bed in the middle of the night. All of the sudden you realize that some strange creature is breathing on you in the middle of the night about a 1/16 of an inch away from our faces. It's a miracle kids aren't scarred from seeing the warped faces of their parents when they suddenly awaken their parents out of a deep sleep. In this story you can almost see Eli half wake up and mumble out that he hadn't called Samuel and that he go back to sleep. Then just as he was dozing off Samuel busts back in and repeats the scene. It isn't until the third time that Eli discerns that God was calling Samuel. In and of itself this is an indictment of Eli. He had forgotten to be prepared to hear from God, and he was unpracticed in hearing God's voice. We learn that the word of the LORD was rare in those days.

This still may seem a bit intangible. After all, Peter tells us that we have something surer in the scriptures than any amazing experience we can have with God. This is why we focus on the word of God here, and not on emotions, or inclinations that God told us something. But perhaps this might be more the experience we can all be familiar with. Do you take time to pray when you wake up in the middle of the night seemingly for no reason, or when you wake up vexed. Dear friends, the point of this is that we are at all times to

be ready to listen and to call out to God, which means that at all times we are seeking to live in a manner worthy of the gospel to which we have been called, lest we God judge us with silence for our pride and sinful independence.

The **second picture** presented in the text for the reader to consider is that the King of Israel was calling from His court. The Tabernacle is the King's court. The priests were to serve the King at His beckoning regardless of the time and would function as messengers to communicate the King's wishes to His subjects. This is where one would expect to hear the voice of God and see what God would have them see.

The scripture tell us now that because of our identification with Christ in salvation, true Christians are the temples of the living God. Here is the **point and an important principle for the Christian life, God's leading and our further understanding of His word comes through faithfulness in doing what He has called us to be and then in what He has called us to do.** Samuel was a God follower first. He was a Jew and worshipper of Jehovah in practice and in faithfulness. Secondly, he served as priest under Eli. He was where he needed to be, and it was there that God began to reveal His will to Samuel and Samuel began to learn how to listen for His voice. My friends, **it is the integrity that guide and protects the believer**, as **Proverbs 11:3** states. **We don't find the will of God or discern the clarity of His leading and direction when we are not present where He expects us to be.** It is one of the reasons being in church is so important. How can we expect to change when we are not in a place that is dedicated not only to worship, but to hearing and applying God's word to our lives. Hearing God's word with God's people has been one of the most transforming tools in my Christian life. It has been in these contexts that I have grown, been convicted of sin, confessed sin and found grace and forgiveness, and found my closest relationships.

Let me get even more practical with this. I remember being in college and asking God to lead me to someone with whom I could share my life and do ministry with. The first step was knowing God had called me to ministry and surrendering to the direction of people over me to start getting prepared for ministry. So, I went to college with that in mind. Then came the discipline of prayer and seeking the Lord, and seeking to be as faithful to my responsibilities as a student as I could, which meant that in my religious studies I was part of outreach ministries. In one of those ministries, I met Marjorie who was also seeking to serve as she had opportunity. Once we were married, we looked for a church to be a part of. It was in that church that I was approached about being part of a development program for guys looking to be

in ministry, and so I was able to complete my seminary. My friends, what I am trying to underscore is that God's provision of direction and leading to is seen more and more when we are faithful with what we know we should be doing as Christians.

I close with this verse, which I believe aligns us properly with the spirit of this passage and message,

Psalm 37:3–7 (ESV): 3 Trust in the Lord, and do good;
dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.

4 Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

5 Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him, and he will act.

6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,
and your justice as the noonday.

7 Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way,
over the man who carries out evil devices!

Psalm 37:27–29 (ESV): 27 Turn away from evil and do good;
so shall you dwell forever.

28 For the Lord loves justice;
he will not forsake his saints.

They are preserved forever,
but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.

29 The righteous shall inherit the land
and dwell upon it forever.