

## Sermon 15 January 2012

Epiphany 2

1 Samuel 3:1-10

Often when our landline phone rings, I miss the call... The ring is not very loud, and my hearing is fading and the phone is a long way from the room where I spend most of my time at home... Often, I miss the call... Thankfully, if they leave a message, I can call back later.

Is it like this with God?

Am I too far away, and unable to hear? Not listening?

Young Samuel was there, in the temple, right near the ark of the covenant. He heard all right, but he didn't get it at first. He thought it was someone else! Understandable I suppose. It's the first time he had heard that voice, and after all, he was still only a child! But, God called, and kept on calling, waiting for a response. God didn't force Godself, but was persistent. Thank God! Much appreciated when I am hard of hearing. Then, the message itself wasn't exactly inspiring! Imagine hearing that on your first date! A heavy criticism of his mentor. What's he going to do with that? Boy, heavy stuff! But old blind Eli has seen a lot in his life. He has an inkling. 'Tell me' he says. I imagine Samuel squirming. How does he get out of this? What will he say? He chooses to tell. They are in for a time of change, and Samuel will be part of it. Eli's house on the other hand is doomed.

God speaks.

God speaks in many and various ways, not all sweetness and light, but challenge, surprise, discomfort, change.

Am I listening?

What is God saying today?

Several days ago I thought of some friends, and I thought to text them to let them know they were in my prayers, but didn't. Later I found out it was a particularly difficult day for them. Oops! Another reminder to listen to my intuition, to listen for the possible voice of God.

How do we know God is actually speaking? How does God speak?

In my experience, God speaks in word and symbol, through a sense, an image, through nature, through other people, through scripture and other stories and words, and through silence.

How do we know it is God who is speaking?

Here are some of my thoughts, or a checklist about this:

First, does it ring true? Is it true to what I know? What does my head say? What does

my heart say? What do my guts say? Is there agreement between the different parts of myself? Does it ring true?

Second, is it consistent with what I know of the Scriptures? What I know of Jesus. You know the phrase 'what would Jesus say'? Or 'what would Jesus do'? A good guideline.

And third, how about tradition, the received wisdom of the Church? What does history say?

And last but not least, is it just? Is it loving? Will it make a positive difference in the world?

If it seems important, I test it out by speaking with my spiritual director, or a wise counselor, not just any friend who will confirm my prejudices!

I might wait, and see if my conviction grows or just fades away. Sometimes I have an idea and think it is God speaking, but the energy for the project dissipates. If it is of God, it will come back again.

Anne Beattie-Stokes says:

Maybe the way God speaks to us is through our deepest gifts and yearnings. As Fred Buechner says, your call (vocation) is where your own deep yearning meets the deep hunger of the world. (Not an exact quote but close enough.)

January 11, 2012 at 1:33 pm.

To recap, from this Samuel reading then, we glean:

God speaks, at least to some!

God doesn't force, doesn't override individual sovereignty but is Persistent!

God works with us.

Others can help discern the voice of God.

When we hear, it is our choice how to respond.

God chooses unlikely people like Samuel and dare I say, us...

Luke A. Powery writes: (1 Samuel 3:1-20: Prayerful Listening, Prophetic Proclaiming)

This upcoming weekend leads into the day which celebrates the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King was a preacher, pastor, and civil rights activist. When people remember Dr. King, one of the first things they may think of is his "I Have a Dream" speech delivered before the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963 for the March on Washington, D.C. for Civil Rights. He was a gifted orator rooted in the black church tradition. But he was so much more than an effective communicator. He had a deep concern for the racially and socioeconomically oppressed who suffered under the unjust hands of modern day pharaohs.

This concern led him to fight for human rights through nonviolent resistance. He fought for racial justice on behalf of those who were deemed non-human to

such an extent that they could be fire hosed down like dogs in the streets by policemen. He fought for economic justice, working on behalf of the poor and died fighting on behalf of sanitation workers in Memphis, TN as part of the Poor People's Campaign. He called for peace and an end to the Vietnam War. Dr. King was indeed a "drum major for justice."