

1/22/23 - 1 Sam. 3:1-21 - "When God Speaks, We Receive"

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[0 : 00] 1 Samuel chapter 3. Now the boy, Samuel, was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli.

And the word of the Lord was rare in those days. There was no frequent vision. At that time, Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place.

The 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. Then the Lord called Samuel and he said, Here I am.

And 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.

And the Lord called again, Samuel. And Samuel arose 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.

[1 : 07] Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord. And the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. And the Lord called Samuel again the third time.

And he arose and went to Eli and said, Here I am, for you called me. Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the young man. Therefore, Eli said to Samuel, Go, lie down.

And if he calls you, you shall say, Speak, Lord, for your servant hears. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the Lord came and stood, calling as at other times, Samuel, Samuel.

And Samuel said, Speak, for your servant hears. 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.

On that day, I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house from beginning to end. And I will declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever for the iniquity that he knew.

[2 : 23] Because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore, I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.

Samuel lay until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. But Eli called Samuel and said, Samuel, my son.

And he said, Here I am. And Eli 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.

So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the Lord. Let him do what seems good to him. And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and let none of his words fall to the ground.

And all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established as the prophet of the Lord. And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

- [3 : 45] Amen. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. In the stillness of any solemn silence that exists, it's a unique moment, solemn silence.
- It's something that our household is very rarely experiencing with four young children. And it's a unique moment because we hear things that we would otherwise not even know exist because it's drowned out by all the noise that surrounds our lives.
- In fact, during dramatic, silent occasions, you can hear your own heartbeats even. You can hear that tinnitus ringing in all of our ears.
- Some may even take a visit to a sensory deprivation tank, known as an isolation tank, to receive what's known as REST.
- It's Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy. Back in the 50s, John Lilly, an American physician and neuroscientist, designed this tank.
- [5 : 03] It's soundproof, and it's filled with just a foot of salt water. And individuals would go into this soundproof tank, and it would be as if they're floating there in that salt water tank.
- Floating because the water and the air is designed to match your body temperature. So you literally are floating there in the middle of nowhere.
- And in recent studies, this form of therapy has presented some promising benefits to mental health, but also has created some interesting psychosis-like hallucinations at the same time people leave this tank after experiencing that silence forever changed.
- Silence is indeed deafening, because sometimes the things that we are so unaware of, like our own heartbeats, or that ringing in our ear, is so loud when everything is silent.
- And you realize that the ongoing noise in life actually becomes a comfort, just like all of us sleeping with our fans on, just like the ways that we have our white noise machines.
- [6 : 26] I sleep wonderful when my girls don't sleep well because I have to lay with them with their white noise machine. Why is that? Because often noise is a comfort in our lives.
- And facing true silence is indeed unpleasant, an unpleasant experience for many. In verse 1 of chapter 3, we see, now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli, and the word of the Lord was rare in those days.
- There was no frequent vision. Silence. Silence. This is the silence that was experienced in the days of Eli. And to think about it, when Shiloh, as with context that supports, Shiloh was filled with noise.
- It was filled with religion. Priests were going about, right? Offering sacrifices. There were rituals being observed.
- Deserved noise of devotion. But on the other hand, there was also widespread idolatry. There was debauchery.
- [7 : 47] Noise of depravity. There was noise of devotion and noise of depravity. And our day today is not too far disconnected by such coexistence between righteousness and lawlessness.
- Our days include a minimization of sin. A normalization of it. And while churches have become assemblies that mark out where the world ends and the church begins, the church actually just invites sin to go unaddressed.
- No judgment here. Come walking in. Unfortunately, the noise even carries on in the church. It's easy to compromise. But what I want us to see here in our series is that when God speaks, we receive.
- And specifically, which will recur throughout this passage in the sermon today, is that when God speaks, things change. When God silences the noise, here, sin is not accepted, but it is rejected.
- When God speaks, a line is drawn. But only if He speaks. Only if He gives silence to actually hear Him when He speaks.

[9 : 28] And God breaks the silence in this passage today. It is, like Bill said, it is a wonderful passage, but is it really in the scope of redemptive history?

God speaks, and it's not what we would all expect, as some might proclaim blessings to come and just speak and speak and speak.

What happens when He actually speaks judgments? And in the passage today, He breaks that silence, and breaking the silence, He breaks the noise of devotion.

All the priests run around with their sacrifices. He breaks the depravity of idolatry and debauchery, and more importantly, the effect that it has on this nation is that things change from this point forward.

And so, what I want to do in this narrative, it is a narrative structure, and so, I want to break this up into two different sections, and I'll identify them as points today, and we'll be taking this section by section and verse by verse, but what I want us to see is that when God speaks, we receive.

[10 : 46] Amen? Let's pray as we go into the text. Father, we come to You today, and we are just grateful to come to something that is absolutely, positively true, that when we open our Word, we turn to the living God, just as Your breath just reaches us by Your pages of Scripture.

Father, help us to draw from that well, help us to look upon a text and see You and hear You in our lives today. And Father, we pray that this time would be a time of encouragement, but also a challenging time of correction as we submit ourselves to the authority of Your Word and myself included.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen? So the first point that we have today is that God seeks a faithful herald of His Word.

God seeks a faithful herald of His Word. Isn't it true that when you experience all the good things in life is that they're never really appreciated until they're gone?

I've been laying off the sugar since the end of December, and yeah, I sure do miss that sugar. We don't ever appreciate those things in our lives until they're gone.

[12 : 22] And one of the causes is because we take for granted the good days. We let our guards down in the good days.

I was just at a wedding yesterday, and just to think back on my own wedding of those doors opening in the back of the sanctuary, and that my instruction to this couple getting married yesterday was to take it in.

Do not take this for granted. Yeah, family might be crazy, absolutely crazy. Weddings bring out the worst in people, but it is also a time that no one can touch a moment in time that is comparable and that's rooting like a wedding day does.

And so here, this nation has obviously forgotten, taken for granted. They've let their guard down, which naturally inaugurates bad days.

The nation has found themselves in that place of forgetfulness, and the God who spoke all things into creation, calling leaders to lead, and calling a nation to honor Him.

[13 : 33] God is silent. Verse 1 indicates that even Samuel was ministering before the Lord in devotion, but he was unfamiliar with the God of creation and redemption.

Isn't that ironic that he did not know the Lord in verse 1? He was working in the tabernacle. He was observing all the sacrifices, and still, there was this disconnect of who God is and what God desires in his life.

He was kind of going through the motions, and I think providentially speaking, he was guided by God, but he had no idea the God who was guiding him yet.

In verse 2 and 3, sort of opens up this contrast between Eli and Samuel. Even Eli seems to have grown soft in his role in the temple.

Do you see it there? By how he failed the Lord to discipline his sons in sinful behavior. Truly, just as the text says that his sight has gone dim, so too has the spiritual depravity of this nation.

[14 : 54] It's been a dimmed light in this nation. A light that it once held as they left the wilderness under Moses' instruction into Joshua.

This is a moment in Israel's history that was a critical illustration after all the rise of the kings and kingdoms and the monarch has finally come, that Amos warns soon-to-be-exiled Israel who has found themselves at another season, a little bit later in these pages here.

They found themselves nearing exile and Amos 8, 11 says a similar warning when he warns his hearers in chapter 8. He says, Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.

They shall wander from sea to sea and from north to east. They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it.

Church, we can observe all the ordinances that are instituted for us at Steel Valley Church. We can take the bread, dip it in the juice. We can observe baptism. We can become church members.

[16 : 31] We can have perfect church attendance. We can serve in children's ministry every Sunday for the rest of the year. You can help that old lady across the street as much as you want. We can serve the poor.

We can be united relationally, but without God speaking, all that we do is noise. In fact, there is such a strong contrast between the rarity of the word of the Lord and the failings of priesthood.

Do you see this connection, church? Isn't it not too common in our day and age to find some church in the United States, somewhere in the world with another pastor failing due to sexual immorality?

It just happened not long ago, even in our own area, that has caused huge turmoil. And could these failings in priesthood be theologically linked to the failure of speaking the word of the Lord?

I don't think you would be far off according to this text. God is calling heralds, not hypocrites. The pastor office, the office of elder, is not anything to be taken lightly.

[17 : 59] It is a title, but it is a character. Before one becomes a pastor or an elder, there has to be character. And the Lord is calling heralds, not hypocrites.

You see, a void of God's word being poorly heralded is the beginning of a season of famine, a season of decline, and a season of loss.

When the Bible is open, our opinion closes. Our ambitions change, and spiritual renewal can begin only with God's word open and our opinions closed.

In the days of Amos and the other minor prophets writing to the soon to be exiled Israel, a little bit further back over on this side, in those days of Amos' writings, reading this letter here as this nation is facing exile would be reminded of what the beginning of spiritual renewal entails.

angels. And this is a similar reminder for leaders today. And pastors and elders, even deacons at Steel Valley Church, I encourage you and implore you to be characters worthy of the calling to the office.

[19 : 28] And it's interesting here. There's like this stillness in the text. Do you see it? Coming up to verse 4, we see this stillness.

It's like the coolness of morning. And the light of the tabernacle is kept burning. And it's just, you know, growing dim, but it's not out.

Exodus 27 actually instructed to keep a light burning throughout the night till dawn in the tabernacle. And it's at this coolness and stillness of that morning that it's like symbolically speaking that flame is growing so dim.

And it's directly connected with God's speaking. And this is indeed just as the dawn is about to break. This is the dawning of a new day.

Indicating that the very flame that illuminates God's place in the night is the one that is illuminating sleeping Samuel who is sleeping in the pew of the sanctuary near the just near the location of the ark.

[20 : 48] And a strange voice comes, verse 4. It's almost comical, this interaction between Samuel and Eli.

I mean, we can't blame Eli. He tried to kick poor Hannah out of the tabernacle because she was weeping, right? Right? It's a strange unknown voice breaking through the silence and awakens Samuel, a voice that Eli once knew.

And so between verse 4 and verse 9, there's multiple times this voice would come and it would wake Samuel up.

And though the word of the Lord was indeed rare, even the most devoted like Samuel was, even him who was sleeping in the pew because he wanted to be close to the Lord, the ark of the covenant, even somebody who just desired to be so closely in God's presence, near God's presence, it was even rare for him to be able to identify the voice of the Lord.

And Samuel would run three times to Eli's chamber, confused, utterly confused, thinking that Eli was calling him and Eli basically saying, yeah, go lie down, nobody's calling you, right?

[22 : 12] And I would imagine in such silence and disarray at this time. Our inclination might be to, in Eli's standpoint, to instruct Samuel to go tell that voice, I know who that voice is, that voice hasn't spoken to me in years, go tell him to bug off, we're done with it, right?

In our cynical mindset, when we're experiencing God's silence, we can sometimes become close off to God rather than asking God what is he trying to teach us?

And we become mad and angered, and I would imagine some of us in these seasons may come off to Samuel as tell him to go away, we don't need him, clearly he doesn't need us, right?

And Eli even being as flawed as he was, I don't think that this was necessarily the case with him though, because despite God speaking and him realizing that God is speaking to Samuel, I think Eli's desire to speak and to hear from the Lord was greater than any frustration he might experience.

Like he so desired, he didn't care if it came from a donkey, he wanted to hear from the Lord. And he wanted him to speak to someone as this day was void of God speaking.

[23 : 44] In verse 10, upon the fourth summons, things sort of change. Eli says, oh, I know what's going on here. And so he instructs Samuel to reply to the voice, speak for your servant hears.

If only pulpits around Youngstown were filled with pastors responding to God's word with such attentiveness, we might then witness the revival that we long for, a reformation in the church that we so desire, that churches seek.

The only hope for renewal in churches begins with attentive heralds to God's word, attentive churches to receive God's word.

God's word is the source of divine inspiration. We don't need to create our own messages from pulpits. The message is here.

I don't need to convince you on how to make five ways to make good choices in your life. And wave my arms around and pace the stage back and forth.

[25 : 01] I don't need to do that. The message is here. I don't need to give you a couple lessons from the book of Ruth. I need you to hear the message in Ruth.

We need to hear and speak His message where we encounter His will. 2 Peter 2.21 says, For no prophecy has ever been produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Well, you might say, well, where is that found? That sounds a little bit of like what Eli's experiencing here. So, we should be asking for this audible voice to break through as a normative case, even though it seems abnormal.

Not necessarily, because 2 Peter 3.16 says, All Scripture is breathed out by God.

It is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

[26 : 16] Where God's Word speaks, His people do thrive. You see, darkness declined.

You can look at the latest Pew research polls to see, it seems like the church is kind of on the struggle bus. They don't know who they are, they don't know who God is. And could we find actually the problem in 1 Samuel 3?

Darkness, decline, depravity, cannot coexist where God is speaking to man. When God speaks to man, man benefits even if it is in judgment. Do you see?

And man responding back to God. God. Just as God spoke to the prophets long ago, as Hebrews 1, 1 says, as God spoke to Samuel, and as Samuel spoke to Eli, so too God spoke to the prophets and apostles in order that His revealed Word might speak today, here, in Youngstown, Ohio.

You see, the Word is duty-bound to the covenant community. God's Word is for the church. It is for us, for our covenant community.

[27 : 37] And that's not to say that it's not used to convict the world of sin, that's not what I'm saying, but we are duty-bound to the Word. The Word is duty-bound to us. Without the Word in our covenant community of the church, we're lost, we're hopeless, we're wandering.

We'd be a church quickest to be filled with sin and disarray and darkness and in silence or possibly a bunch of noise. Those who honor God, God will honor.

We saw that last week, 1 Samuel 2.30. And this is certainly true. And the most unloving thing that I can do to shepherd this church is to keep giving you week after week my ideas and how I feel about the text, about what I felt when I woke up suddenly at three o'clock in the morning and then all of a sudden I changed my tune and everything.

That's not to undermine God leading and guiding us today, but it surely is a subjective message that needs to be tested. How do you test it? His Word.

The Word says what it says, it means what it means, and as boring as that may sound to us, it never calls into question the authority that the Word has over our lives as God intended.

[29 : 07] The problem is us. noise. The problem is noise. So may we as Steel Valley Church be an assembly where we do assemble to meet the Lord and hear Him speak, just as we do today.

The second point that I want us to see is that God seeks humble recipients of His Word. God seeks humble recipients of His Word.

So Samuel hears from the Lord in verse 11 the message. He hears the message. He discovers the message. But a day is coming, we see in this next portion, a day is coming where all I have spoken to Eli will come in full.

punishments because He minimized sin. He did not discipline lawlessness. The sin is actually so great in Eli's life that there is no sacrifice that is able to reduce its severity.

God's Word came and we learn something about God. God hates representatives, heralds, who sin, who do evil and know of evil and do nothing about it.

[30 : 54] sin. You see, God judges sin. We understand how He confronts it as well. He confronts it through this unknown man previously in chapter 2.

He approached Eli directly. And now He's using Samuel. We understand that God judges sin, but we also see how He confronts it through others.

and we might ask, well, what did Eli do? What did Eli do here? Well, He literally did nothing. He allowed sin to go unaddressed.

He allowed the temple to be absolutely profaned. He allowed the nation of Israel to be led astray in idolatry and debauchery. He remained idle to sin and never once thought about putting an end to it.

The authority bestowed to Eli as prophet and priest was to discipline even to the point of removing His sons from the tabernacle through excommunication for silence to then weigh in on their ears to convict their hearts outside of the tabernacle.

[32 : 12] But how can we, you and me, being sinners, sinners, I mean, it's a frightening reality that God judges sin, isn't it?

How can we be assured of a renewed relationship with God? Well, we have a hope that was out of Eli's grasp.

We renounce sin. We renounce sin. And how do we renounce that? By the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross.

It is the gospel of which we're turned to. For Samuel, it occurred through the prophetic revelation that would lead Israel to give them a king.

Spoiler alert in the book of Samuel. Samuel. It would lead to this. But in our day, we can rest assured in the special revelation where Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of Scripture that He has given us, King Jesus, who died the penalty that we deserve, paid a debt that He didn't owe, that we deserve the wrath of God, but He bore it for us, and our sins were placed upon Him on the cross, and He died a sufficient death to atone for our sin, to set us free.

[33 : 32] That's our King. That's who died. And the message of 1 Samuel and the turning point of this narrative causes the recipients of those facing exile a little bit over here to come to grips with sin and repent.

It's almost like you can hear through the words of Amos that we just read, he's saying, remember Samuel, remember Eli, right?

In other words, we don't need more noise in our lives. We either need God's speaking or we need God's silence. There is no in-between.

And in the revelation of God to man is a call to new life. We see this is true for Israel, pre-monarch and post-monarch.

In fact, at this point of Samuel's hearing God's Word was the beginning of new life. Things are about to change for Samuel in a big way.

[34 : 40] Things are about to get a little bit interesting between him and Eli. And things are going to change for Israel. And taking a step further, even though our lives can be vibrant in religious activity, we can have preachers all over Youngstown.

There can be preachers everywhere. All the churches can be open. We could be doing community events. We could do a March for Jesus each and every weekend. And all these evangelistic activities, but without the Word of the Lord, we actually have nothing to offer the world of which we're serving.

That is a hard reality that every church has to come to grips with. Today, we have what Eli, Samuel, and his sons did not have, the completed revelation of God's Word in the Bible.

Herein only here is new life to be found. If only we would make it discoverable. Not just quoting a couple verses here and there that would advance our message and what I'm feeling like talking about today, and I'll use some verses to support my opinions and ideas.

That's not God's speaking. What we need is to expose His message within the Word.

[36 : 09] That is when God speaks to His church today. Eli would discover God's word as reiterated through a separate source.

Remember that unknown guy came and basically rebuked Eli, made him feel real good about himself, saying that his sons are going to die? You know, we want that for a Sunday message, don't we? And so, he got this separate validation.

So, Samuel has no idea that Eli was visited by this unknown guy. And Eli's life would change completely because of God's message being heralded, untouched, unmanipulated.

Look at how he communicates it. Eli's like saying, talk to me. And it's actually interesting in verse 17, and Eli said, what was it that He told you?

Do not hide it from me. May God do to you, and more so, more also if you hide anything from me of all that He told you. It's like, Eli, if you could have that same veracity with being a priest, you'd be doing a little better than you're doing here, buddy.

[37 : 33] So, he's clinging to Samuel's speak, and look what he does. Samuel didn't quickly communicate, simply communicate his message of, well, I have a message for you today, Eli.

It's five ways for you to become a better parent. And so, the takeaway, and he'll be running around the stage for him, right?

Right? We need to discipline, and all his hype, and emotions, and yelling, sweat, calorie burning, running around. No.

What Samuel did is he spoke the message that God gave him. Samuel spoke, Eli received, things changed.

I want you to see that. And God has done this throughout history, church. He has done this throughout history. Genesis 1, God brought all things by the power of his word.

[38 : 40] By God's word, he called leaders like Abraham, Moses, and Samuel. By God's word, through his leaders, not only in the prophets and priests, but the kings and the apostles, through leaders, and he called and gathered, and we're calling them to keep his word.

Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1.23, we have been born again not of perishable seed, but of imperishable through the living and abiding word of God.

David rejoiced in God's word being perfect. Right? It was perfect, reviving the soul, sure, making wise the simple. God's word is right, rejoicing the heart.

God's word is pure, enlightening the eyes. God's word is true and righteous all together, Psalm 19. And John Wesley cried, Oh, give me that book.

At any price, give me the book of God. Church, if it's judgment we need to hear, let's hear it.

[39 : 57] If it's correction we need to hear, then let's hear it. If it's condemnation we need to hear, let's hear it. If it's repentance, if it's restoration, if it is blessing, if it is redemption, let's hear it.

Just give me the book. Silence the noise. I don't know what's in the coffee today. Better to have God silence the noise of our aimless devotion and breakthrough to our hearts to then guide our lives.

Better for God to silence the noise of our depravity, and our sin and break through to our hearts to see the light our souls long for.

When God speaks, things change. It was true for Eli. It was true for Samuel. As we read into Ezra, it was true for Ezra.

It was true for Amos. It was true for us today. Maybe you're not a believer today, and you might sense that God is doing something today that you have never expected Him to do your entire life.

[41 : 30] The passage does offer great severity. It's hard. It's challenging. It offers actually no restoration to Eli. It's very doom and gloom.

And it's offering no restoration to those who are aware of the truth who do not live that truth. But this doesn't have to be you today.

As long as there's breath in your lungs and there's something thumping in your chest, a dim light may be seen even for you today.

Having faith in Jesus Christ, you can confidently draw near to God, regardless of the noise in our lives, your past failures, your criminal records, your failures on your way to church today, and receive forgiveness, complete forgiveness.

You see, this whole passage of judgment, this whole thing needs to indicate in 1 Samuel chapter 3 that the central role of judgment against Eli's house is a Christus-centric message to magnify the vantage points of the cross.

[42 : 56] Do you see that? When we come to grips with the reality of our sin, we don't have to bear that weight anymore. God's Word is calling us to not bear that weight today.

So come to faith in Jesus Christ. Let Jesus be King over all things and be known by this King today.

This certainly has a message for the church. Jesus warns the religious leaders of His day that honoring God is not mere lip service.

And it's not an adherence to human rules. That's like pharisaical stuff. But it's a heartfelt loyalty.

It's something that changes within us, that changes everything of which we do. And this is not simply to say that we as a church, we have to be perfect.

[44 : 00] And here comes Brent with his yardstick about to slap our hands because we've done sin again. No. Because I would be disqualified from standing here before you at this pulpit without the blood of Jesus Christ.

No. Heartfelt loyalty is simply repenting when we do fail. Recognizing that we need something outside of ourselves.

Outside of your paycheck that you get. Outside of your home or your kids or even your own spouse. you need Jesus.

Heartfelt loyalty is repenting when we fall. Humbling ourselves under God's authority in our lives and making progress in sanctification. And I along with you all. You see, grace and truth do meet at the cross.

The grace of God offered through Jesus Christ is irrevocable. This is good news. grace and truth especially to us stubborn sinners that just can't shake the sin in our lives.

[45 : 11] The grace of God offered through Jesus Christ is irrevocable. And think about the truth of God's judgment against sin is also irrevocable without Jesus Christ.

So how much more strong we grasp the cross of Christ in forgiveness and pardon for our sin. God spoke things changed.

This is Eli's resolve in the matter. He saw that that grace of God over Samuel's life and the judgment over his life it was just irrevocable. There's nothing he could have done.

And in verse 21 that light begins to shine and the Lord appeared again at Shiloh for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

Church, may we come and cling to our first love poor in spirit answering God's word today with the similar words of Samuel.

[46 : 16] Here I am O Lord speak your servant is listening. May this be true for all of us today. Let's pray.