

## ***“Speak, God, I’m listening!”***

**January 15, 2006**

*Text: 1 Samuel 3:1-10, John 1:35-51*

### I.

A recent survey conducted by the Catholic Church found that the majority of those interviewed reported having *mystical, life-changing* experiences with God.

Well enough! My guess is that most of us would nod in the affirmative for having had such experiences as well. But the survey goes to say that the majority of those who reported having had such experiences also said they had never told anyone. When asked to explain this, the typical reply was ...

- *they didn’t want people to think they were some weirdo ...*
- *... some sort or religious freak or something.*

Does God speak to you? That’s an awesome prospect, isn’t it?

**Moses, Moses!** (Remember God’s calling of Moses??) **Come no closer ... remove your sandals ... you’re standing on holy ground.**

(And then, the call of Isaiah) *Then one of the angels flew to me, holding a live coal taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The angel touched my mouth with it and said, Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt is gone and your sin is removed.*

*Then I hear the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will be my messenger? And I said, Here I am, Lord. I will go; send me!*

Does God speak to you? Do you feel you have this sort of connection to the Almighty?

### II.

In our reading from **1 Samuel**, the prophet Samuel (who is but a young boy at the point of the reading ... he’s actually being mentored by Eli the priest) ... Samuel is being called by God. At first, Samuel has no idea who is calling; he thinks it must be Eli, his mentor.

However, after a couple rounds of this calling routine, Eli tells Samuel that it must be God who is calling him and that the next time it happens, to say: ***Speak, God, your servant is listening.***

At this point, Samuel has a clear advantage over any of us who might wonder if God is speaking to us. Samuel has a context.

- He's been told that God is calling him. In other words, he's ready.
- He's listening with a heightened sense of expectation.

Sure enough, when the Almighty calls out: **Samuel, Samuel**, Samuel is ready to go. *Speak, God, your servant is listening.*

The challenge of *listening* for God's voice ... of trying to connect in whatever way to the Creator of all that is, is a steep one.

### III.

The Bible teaches us that our faith is not so much about our pursuit of God as it is God's pursuit of us. Certainly, we see that in God's calling of Moses ... Isaiah ... Jeremiah and others.

All of which means: God wants us ...

- God wants relationship with us—interaction.
- And of course God wants our worship, our gratitude and humility of spirit.
- God wants our heart, the core of our being.
- God wants spiritual union with us (the deepest union).

If indeed God is in pursuit of us, perhaps we need to work harder at finding improved ways of listening—improved, more enlightened (whatever the term is) ways of opening ourselves to God's truth ... to God's vision and purposes.

In fact, if we think about it, perhaps we need to think of ways that we can be more prepared—more ready—to hear God's voice ... to sense God's presence ... to be in touch with God's spirit ...

When we think about our faith, how does God connect with us? And with what level of readiness and anticipation do we listen?

For example, do we listen in ways (and with the *faith and trust*) that are really open? Or do we listen only for what we want to hear? What we want communicated to us?

### IV.

The Bible is full of people whose initial reaction to God's call is resistance and tension.

- Moses didn't want anything to do with Egypt ... insisted he wasn't good speaker.
- Jeremiah protested that he was too young ...

- Jonah disregarded God altogether and headed in the opposite direction ...
- God had to knock the Apostle Paul to the ground, with lightening from on high to get his attention ...

To say, *speaking, God, I'm listening* asks something of us. Much like the disciples agreeing to follow Jesus in our reading from John's gospel. It asks something of us. We gotta *come and see*, says Jesus. We have to get out of our comfort zone ... and really see and hear ... so we can act in ways that better realize God's purposes.

In our modern American culture, we're not always very good at listening. Think about your life! Do you live your life in ways that encourage serious listening? Do we have the time ... the desire ... the open mindedness ... the compassion ... the love???

Listening with all our mind, heart and soul could change our lives. ... any of us. Of course, there's always the possibility that we don't want to change. Jonah didn't want to change. Very likely, the Apostle Paul was a lot of work to convert as well. We can be a stubborn people ... set in our ways.

To really listen—particularly to God, whose purposes are always greater than ours—asks something of us. It says to us:

- *Hey, get ready to get outside of box of your life.*
- *Get ready for a new perspective, for a new way of seeing things.*
- *Get ready—perhaps—to be born again ... to be redirected ...*

As the prophet reminds us (Second Isaiah): *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways ... as far as the heavens are higher than the earth, so far are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

## V.

In his book, *Faith for the Journey*, Bruce Larson talks about a successful factory that made drills. One day the owner announced to the corporate board that he was retiring and that he had chosen his son as his successor. At the next board meeting the son asked his four vice-presidents, *What are your goals for the company for the next five years?*

One vice-president replied, *Well, sir, we're looking at new sizes and shapes for different drills.* The other vice-presidents said pretty much the same thing.

The son then dropped his bombshell: *Gentlemen*, he started out, *there is no market for drills.* You could feel the tension begin to fill the air. Going on, he said, *from now on, we will not THINK drills. We will not SELL drills. From now on, we'll sell HOLES. People don't want to buy a drill; they want to make a hole.*

As they began to think of other ways to create holes, soon they developed, among other things, lasers for hole-drilling. This attitude and other innovations kept this company in business while its competitors lost large shares of the market and some even went bankrupt.

In our listening for God's voice ... our listening for a glimpse of God's ways, we have to come before the Almighty with an open mind and a ready spirit. We have to be *ready* to hear.

Forget the drills; from now on we're selling holes. Forget what we've always *assumed* was God's will or purpose ... or what we want God's desires to be. What is God really saying to us?

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## VI.

I'm listening with my hands and feet. I'm listening with my heart and soul. I'm listening with the creative impulses in my spirit. Listening for the voice of the holy God, the God of infinite mystery and wonder, takes energy and a sense of purpose.

In John's gospel, the theme ***come and see*** is a recurring theme.

- Jesus says to Andrew, the brother of Peter, ***Come and see!***
- Soon after this, Philip answers the cynical Nathanael with the same words: ***come and see.***
- Later, the Samaritan woman at the well (the *Samaritans*, you'll remember, we're historically outcasts to the Jews) ... she's met Jesus ... and when she returns to her people, she says to them, ***Come and see!*** Come and see the man who, amazingly, knew everything about me.

Seeing with eager and open eyes can be a *listening* of the best kind. When we have a first hand sense of *the presence of God*, everything changes. In God's presence, we're able to **forgive and be forgiven.**

1. We're able to stop measuring ourselves, all the time, by our *doing* ... by what we do and how much we do ... and all the ego stuff that's a part of that world ...
2. And we're able to simply *live* as if *we know the grace of God has spilled over us*. And not be afraid to *tell someone*. It's okay to share our faith. It's okay to talk about God ...

## VII.

Do any of you perhaps remember the Mercedes TV commercial some years back ... that showed a Mercedes crashing into a wall during a safety test? An engineer with a white lab coat on walks over after the crash and kneels down to examine the damage, which is minimal.

After the engineer glowing boasts of the unique design, a reporter asks him why Mercedes doesn't enforce the patent on the design which has apparently been copied by several other companies because of its success.

The engineer replies, matter-of-factly: ***Because some things in life are too important not to share.***

### ***SPEAK, GOD, I'M LISTENING!***

And when we listen faithfully enough and long enough, we wake up one day saying, **whoa!** I don't have to be this way ... or think this way ...

I can let go of my stubbornness ... my resentments ... my anger ... my sour attitude, whatever it is. And I can allow the Spirit to take me to a new day.

**All praise be unto God! Amen!**