1 Samuel 3:10b Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

I want you to try and put yourself in the sandals of Samuel. You are a boy, about 7-8 years old. You have been born in interesting circumstances. Your mother tells you how she prayed for you and how the High Priest blessed her as she was praying. She tells you right from the start that she had promised God that you would be his servant and that she would give you over to the service of the Lord. She is preparing you for that. You been living with your parents. You have seen that other children are born to them. And now, at around 5-6 years of age the time has come.

You and your Mom go to Jerusalem to the Temple and there your mother Hannah presents you to Eli the High Priest. You will be living at the Temple and serving Eli from now on. Evidently Eli does treat Samuel different than his own sons. His own sons, grow up bratty and spoiled and as adults live a “we will do what we want to” existence. But Samuel, Samuel will be different. But maybe the difference isn’t found in Eli, but rather the difference is found in what happens in our text. But I get ahead of myself.

Here’s my question for you. How would your fare as Samuel? Would you feel abandoned by your parents, bitter that you end up living in the Temple instead of the home you started in? Would you feel unloved and abandoned? It even makes you kind of wonder what kind of psychotic behaviors you would develop! How would you do as Samuel?

But here is what I want to tell you. Samuel, even as a young boy, even as that 5-6 year old who is taken to the Temple to begin serving the Lord, Samuel is content, excited and humbled to be given this awesome privilege of serving. Samuel, seems to grasp that God has a purpose for him and his intent is clearly that He wants to fulfill that purpose of God in his life. All of this because no doubt his mother taught him to trust and rely totally on the Lord God. Hannah helped Samuel to understand the grace of God in his birth and to understand the love of God, the wonder of God in his serving at the Temple. I am telling you, this boy Samuel and his mother, Hannah, give us an example of faith and trust in God that is completely awesome.

Here is what I will also tell you. Because this young boy is serving the Lord and because this young boy has the attitude of a true servant of God, God is going to further bless Him and I believe with good reason. I think we can all benefit from this history of Samuel and the wonderful faith he displays. Our theme will be: **THE GIFT OF FAITH!**

Before we get into the text and what happens let me share something that I think has tremendous bearing on this situation. Samuel is given into the service of Eli, who is the High Priest at this time. The office of High Priest means you are the head of all the Church of the Old Testament. You are the very representation of the Messiah. Your office is designed by the Lord to display what the Messiah will be and what the Messiah will do, especially what the Messiah will do. Your job is to be faithful to God, faithful to the revelation of God as far as what God has revealed and given to you so far. You are the total representative of the Lord before the people in every way.

Eli was horrid at it. Do you know why I say that? Because it is recorded for us that Eli’s sons, his two sons are complete and godless scoundrels. They openly disobey and despise the commands of God, even to the point where we are told they “sleeping with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.” Complete scoundrels. So complete that the Scripture very specifically says of them: **“They did not know the Lord.”** That means they were unbelievers, rejecters of truth, lost souls to the Lord.

You know who made them that way? Eli. Eli does not discipline and does not uphold the wonder of God before his sons. Eli has already had a prophet of the Lord come to him and tell him point blank that the High Priesthood would be lost to him and his family. He is told that God intended to have these sons of Eli struck down for their godlessness, and it would happen in one day. The Lord even says to Eli, **“”Why do you, Eli, honor your sons more than me?”** Because of this bad parenting, this evil parenting, Eli and his family will lose this priesthood that was their right.

I have often wondered if it is not the grace of God that is at work to keep the boy Samuel faithful to him. This boy is under the hand of Eli, and Eli it is shown is a horrid example of faithfulness. So here is this child, now about two or so years later that God is going to come to. God is going to take Samuel from the training of Eli to really, personally training the child. And that is when and why the Lord, the word of the Lord comes to Samuel.

 I can imagine what a shock it was for Samuel when the call came. There he was lying down in the Temple, near the Ark of the Lord. It was night and everyone else was sleeping when out of the dark Samuel heard his name called. Stop there! Do you realize that none of the rest of our text would have happened if Samuel wouldn't have heard the call?

 Right there is a real key to the whole matter. You can't be a servant of God unless you hear the call of the Lord. That call of the Lord comes to each of us in the Word of the Lord. Do you see the connection? You want to be faithful, you want to serve the Lord, or you simply want to be a child of God and an heir of eternal life! All of that comes to you and me through the Word of the Lord. Through God’s Holy Word. Through the revelation and grasp that God has spoken to us, God has revealed himself and his salvation to us, God has sent us the Living Word Jesus, as the very means that works in our lives to call us to faith!

 Take Samuel’s call. The text refers to the Word of the Lord. It says, THE WORD OF THE LORD WAS RARE IN THOSE DAYS. It is following that passage that the incident with Samuel is recorded. The call of Samuel was the Word of the Lord coming to him.

 Need I remind you of who and what that Word is? John 1 says, **"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."** There is no doubt that Samuel was being called by the Word of the Lord, the Second Person of the Trinity, the pre-existent Christ. How little things have changed even to this day.

 I say that because you and I are also called by the Lord. We are called to faith in Jesus, the Living Word, by the Word of God that Jesus gave us. Every time we hear the Word of God we are being called to be Christians and servants of the most high God. Just as Samuel had to hear the call from the Word to become a Prophet of God, so you and I have to hear the call of God through His Word to become and to remain Christians. That's the first step in having the gift of faith.

 The next things that happened to Samuel are in a way humorous. Samuel heard the call and not having spoken with God before, Samuel thought that it was Eli that had called. Samuel kept running in and disturbing the sleeping Eli. Finally after the third time, Eli figured out what was going on. He understood the Lord was calling Samuel and he instructs Samuel in what to do. It was now an eager Samuel who went back to the Ark. The difference is that now Samuel understood who was calling. This time Samuel is ready. Just how he is ready is found in his very own words, **"Speak, for your servant is listening."**

 What a lesson? Sometimes we go through the same thing Samuel did, only spiritually. What I mean is that spiritually our faith wavers, a spiritual going back and forth because we haven’t focused on the Word. It goes here and there because we are so anxious to serve that we forget the most important lesson of serving. The most important lesson in serving is that you've got to listen to what the master says first. How often don't we go off to be servants playing the boss? We decide that this and that is okay, when it is not! We think that this and that is forbidden, when it is not. We do that because we haven't learned to listen to the one who calls. We haven't learned to listen to the Lord.

 **"Speak, for your servant is listening."** What a marvelous lesson found in those words. Speak Lord, tell me what you want of me. Speak Lord, I am the servant, you are God. Speak Lord, I have my ears open to hear. Lord help me to read, learn and inwardly digest your Holy Word. Is this your attitude toward the Word?

 Today God calls and speaks to us through His Holy precious Word. That is the way that God has decided He will deal with us, through His Word. The Word of God contains all that we need to know for our lives here and for our lives to come. The Word of God is the most precious thing we have.

 The biggest problem we have is that we all too often have no idea what the Word says. We don't make it our habit to read it. We don't take the time to listen to it. Most of us rely on what someone else tells us the Word says, rather than knowing what the Word says from personal study. We often treat the Word like left-over food. If we have to we'll eat, but we'll grumble all the way and won't enjoy it at all.

 When God speaks to you are you eager and ready to listen to Him? Or could your attitude be summed us with a "Speak Lord, but make it quick." "Speak later, Lord" "Speak, but don't ask me to do anything" Do we sometimes have the attitude, "Don't speak to me." We as Christians have the horrible habit of often putting the Lord off in one way or another.

 As Christians we need to listen. We need to hear what God has done for us. We need to hear what God wants for us. We need to hear what the Lord wants of us. We need to be ready to listen, with all our hearts and souls and minds. Let's work on that, unless of course, you weren't listening. Work on it because it is the heart and core of a strong and true faith.

 The final lesson in being faithful to the Lord is found in the fact that we need to carry out the Lord's Word. As we have already heard, once Samuel knew who was calling he went back to where he was. He was ready and eager to listen as his words of response showed. Not only did Samuel listen but as we read later in the chapter, **“Samuel continued to grow, and the Lord was with him. The Lord let none of his words fall to the ground.”**

 "The Lord let none of His Words fall to the ground." That means that Samuel, with the help of the Lord, did what God asked of him. Samuel was true and faithful to the Lord. When Samuel was told by the Lord that Eli and his household were to be harshly punished for persistence in sin, Samuel did not withhold these words but told them to Eli. Throughout his life, Samuel would time after time demonstrate that as a called servant of God, he would follow God and His Word. You see, Samuel had been given faith and faith believes and trusts in the Lord.

 Here then is our task too. God calls us to be his children. God calls us to be his servants. God might even call us to some kind of public service in His name. He has done that through His Word. Now it is time to carry out that Word, to let people know who we serve. Did you hear the words of our Epistle reading? Is sexual immorality to be a part of our lives? How about we think of what Colossians 3:17 say to us? **"And everything you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father though him."**

 Following, obeying, carrying out God's Word is what we do as Christians. It is part of what it means to be called to serve the Lord. We don't obey to earn something from God. We obey because of our love for God. Love given first by the Lord.

 Let us then follow the call of the Lord in our lives. Let us hear that call to faith. Let us listen to keep our faith strong. Let us live our faith to the glory of God. That is our call. Our call to faith. God help us in this. Amen.