

Minster Bethel Congregational Church (MBCC)

21/03/2021 -- Lent 4

Listen to God



Today is our fortnightly zoom
"Church & Chat"

A short church reflection with a hymn, reading, (children's activity), prayer, "thought for the week" and then a time to chat.

If you need help to join please ask any deacon

All lockdown services can be found at: www.mbccs.co.uk

Good morning and welcome to this week's thoughts.

Our hymn for today "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind"

[Dear Lord and Father of Mankind - YouTube](#)

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways;
re clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity,
interpreted by love!

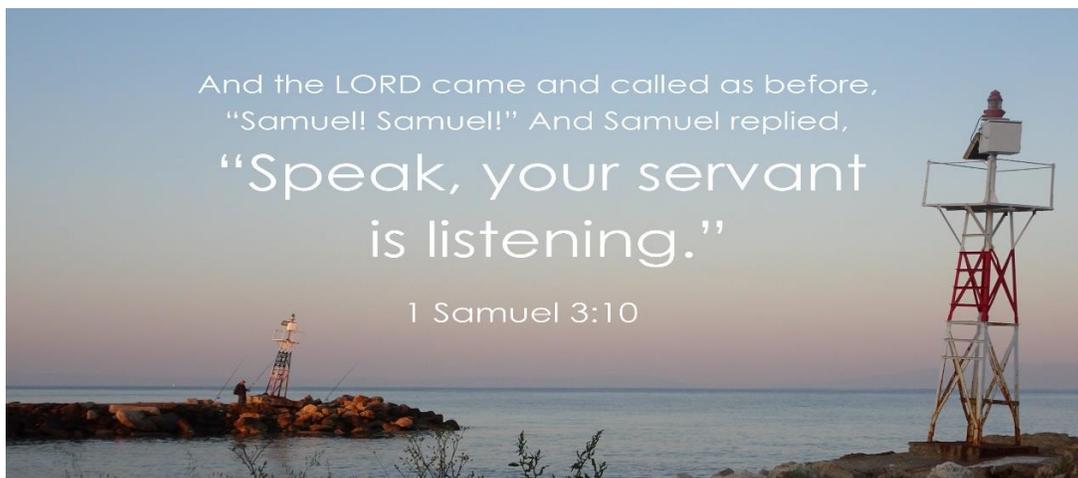
Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!



The reading today is 1 Samuel 3

[1Samuel 3 NIVUK - The LORD calls Samuel - The boy Samuel - Bible Gateway](#)



Listening to God

As we continue through our 40 days of Lent we are at the stage of Listening. We have taken time to stop and we have had a chance to look around us and rejoice in all we see. This week we are challenged to Listen to God.

Let's talk about ears.



An elephant's ears are very large and are used to help keep the elephant cool.

A rabbit's ears are long. Some rabbit's ears stand up straight and others flop over.



Owls have short, pointed ears.



Dogs have ears that allow them to hear things we can't hear.?

Bats have interesting ears. Bats make high pitched sounds that they bounce off objects and then catch the sound waves in their ears. They are then able to form a picture in their mind of what is in front of them. You could say that a bat uses its ears to help it see.



A cricket's ears are located on its front legs, just below its knees.



Our human ears are wonderful. Sound waves enter our ears and cause tiny bones and hairs in our ears to move, sending a signal to our brain that lets us hear many types of sound. But sometimes to listen we need to use our other senses.

"Listen to God" made me remember a story I once heard, from my friend in America. She was telling me that at a large conference in New York City, during a lunch break, two participants went out to grab a sandwich. As they were walking along in the midst of the usual mix of sirens, honking horns, blaring radios and ringing mobiles, one of them stopped abruptly and turned to the other and said, "Did you hear that?" "Hear what?", laughed the other person. "That cricket" replied the first. "There is no way you could hear a cricket in all this noise", the other delegate responded. But the individual walked across the street to a discarded paper cup and when they picked it up, sure enough there was a cricket inside the cup. "That's amazing. How did you do that?" "It's really not that difficult. One hears what one wants to hear. Watch this". The individual proceeded to take a handful of change from his pocket and dropped the coins on the path. As soon as the change hit the floor, every pedestrian within hearing stopped dead in their tracks and turned toward the two of them. "See what I mean? We notice what we're listening for."

There are times in our lives when hearing God is just as difficult as it would be for us to hear a cricket on the noisy streets of any City. I know I certainly feel like that at times and I'm pretty sure I'm not the only one. Learning to listen to God is one of the most important skills we will ever develop in our lives.

Last week was Mother's Day and we touched briefly on Hannah, the mother of Samuel. She prayed to God for a son and promised to give that son to the Lord all the days of his life. God listened to Hannah and answered her prayer and Hannah fulfils her vow and brings her son, to Eli, the priest.

Today we are looking at the time when Samuel is probably around 12 years old. The word of the Lord was rare in those days and there was no frequent vision. Why would that be? Why would God refrain from speaking to His people like that? It is not that God didn't want to speak, but rather that the people weren't interested in hearing from God.

This chapter is all about how Samuel learned to listen to God. Samuel was helping out Eli with his duties in the temple. Late one evening when the lamps that had been lit before going to bed were still burning, Samuel heard a voice and assumed that it was Eli calling him. But Eli told Samuel that he hadn't called him and sent him back to bed. The same thing happened a second time and Eli once again sent Samuel back to bed.

The third time that God speaks to Samuel, Eli finally figures out that it is God speaking and he tells Samuel to go back to bed, but the next time he hears a voice, he is to respond and say, “Speak, Lord, for your servant hears”. And that is exactly what Samuel does when God calls out to him again, and then he hears what God has to say. As Samuel a 12-year boy was willing to listen to God, the Lord was with him and for the rest of his life, God was going to use him to be His mouthpiece through whom He would speak to the entire nation of Israel.

Samuel’s encounter with God reminds us that... If we want to hear God speak we must learn to listen. We can learn from Samuel about how to learn to listen to God.

So how do we listen to God?

1. **Be available** - Samuel put himself in a place where He was near to God. In this passage, we see that Samuel did that in a couple of ways. First, He was serving God in the temple. And second, we see that at night, he slept there in the temple as well. We need to be in a place physically and spiritually to hear God. There are two ways God reveals himself through the Bible and through other people who love God.
2. **Get rid of distractions** - most of us have probably have a hard time hearing from God as we have so many distractions around us. God didn’t speak to Samuel during the day while he was busy serving God and there was a lot of activity in the temple. Instead, He came to Samuel at night, when there were no other distractions around. Finding a place that is free from distractions is probably much harder than it was for Samuel. We need to find time and place where we can be free from distractions, where we can just be with God.
3. **Get to know God** - If a close family member calls you on the phone you immediately recognise their voice because you know them. It’s only as we get to know God personally that we begin to recognise His voice.
4. **Obey** - It was Samuel’s obedience to what God revealed that made it possible for God to continue to speak through Samuel for the rest of his life. Even though he was understandably reluctant to do so, Samuel was obedient to reveal to Eli what God had told him to say. Because Samuel was obedient at that point, God knew He could trust Him with even bigger and more far-reaching revelations later on. God will never reveal more truth about Himself until you have obeyed what you know already.

So once we put ourselves in a position to listen to God by being available, removing distractions, getting to know and obeying God, how does God speak to us?

- We know God speaks to us through the bible. This is the most common way that God speaks to us today.
- He speaks through the Holy Spirit who resides within us. Often what we might call a “gut feel” or a strong sense that we should or shouldn’t do something is actually the Holy Spirit speaking to our spirit.
- He speaks through others, ministers, others within our church and other Christians.
- He speaks through circumstances. Throughout the Bible we see God using circumstances to guide people in their lives.

When God speaks to us, He speaks quietly. God does not normally speak to us like a used car salesman. He is rarely pushy, aggressive, loud and boisterous. Instead, like we see with Elijah, He speaks not in the wind or the earthquake or the fire, but rather in a gentle whisper that still small voice of calm.



Today's Pray:

Lord, we want to hear from You. We want to hear You speaking to our hearts and minds. Help us to listen for and pay attention to You. Speak, Lord, for Your servants are listening. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Samuel Listens and Obeys
—1 Samuel 2, 3, 7

A Voice in the Night

One night after Samuel had gone to bed, he heard a voice calling him. Can you match the sentences below with the one who spoke them? Draw a line from the one who spoke to what he said. You will use the speakers more than once.

"Here I am. You called me."

"I am about to do something in Israel."

"Samuel!"

"Samuel, Samuel!"

"Go lie down. If He calls you, say 'Speak, Lord.'"

"Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening."

"Here I am. You called me."

"I did not call. Go back and lie down."



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