

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, January 21st, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Here I am
Third Sunday After Epiphany
1 Samuel 3:1-10

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

God, our Creator,
from nothing you made our world.
**You formed us, love us,
and give us all that we need.**

God, our Redeemer,
you rescued us from sin.
**You have given us new life
and hope of healing to the world.**

God, our Comforter,
you are with us always.
**You comfort us, renew us,
and guide us into your truth.**

**Almighty God, for your gracious love for us,
we praise you.
Amen.**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God, our Creator and Redeemer,
your faithfulness endures forever.
You offer us new life in Christ Jesus and call us to follow him.
You challenge us to bring life and hope to the world you love.
In you we find strength and courage to face every challenge,
until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ arrives.

Faithful God,
 you sent Jesus Christ to seek and save the lost
 yet it's hard to recognize we have lost our way.
 We seek the next new thing instead of your gift of new life.
 We follow the trends of our culture rather than Jesus' example.
 Wash over us with your cleansing Spirit,
 and renew our commitment to follow your purposes revealed in Christ Jesus.
 And so, we offer our praise and gratitude to you, O God,
 with Christ and the Spirit, as the one True Living God, now and always. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn #375: "Fairest Lord Jesus" (V 1,2,3)

Fairest Lord Jesus,
 ruler of all nature,
 O thou of God and man the Son,
 Thee will I cherish,
 Thee will I honor,
 thou, my soul's glory, joy, and crown.

Fair are the meadows,
 fairer still the woodlands,
 robed in the blooming garb of spring:
 Jesus is fairer,
 Jesus is purer
 who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Fair is the sunshine,
 fairer still the moonlight,
 and all the twinkling starry host:
 Jesus shines brighter,
 Jesus shines purer
 than all the angels heaven can boast.

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
 Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**Holy and merciful God,
 in your presence we confess
 our sinfulness, our shortcomings,
 and our offenses against you.**

You alone know how often we have sinned
 in wandering from your ways,
 in wasting your gifts,
 in forgetting your love.
 Have mercy on us, O Lord,
 for we are ashamed and sorry
 for all we have done to displease you.
 Forgive our sins,
 and help us to live in your light
 and walk in your ways,
 for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
 Your sins are pardoned.
 The penalty is paid.
 Thanks be to God.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.

Responsive Reading

Psalms 62:5-12

⁵ For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
 for my hope is from him.

⁶ **He only is my rock and my salvation,
 my fortress; I shall not be shaken.**

⁷ On God rests my salvation and my glory;
 my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

⁸ **Trust in him at all times, O people;
 pour out your heart before him;
 God is a refuge for us. *Selah***

⁹ Those of low estate are but a breath;
 those of high estate are a delusion;
 in the balances they go up;

they are together lighter than a breath.

¹⁰ **Put no trust in extortion;
set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, set not your heart on them.**

¹¹ Once God has spoken;

twice have I heard this:

that power belongs to God,

¹² **and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.**

**For you will render to a man
according to his work.**

Children's Hymn #773: "Jesus Bids Us Shine"

Jesus bids us shine with a pure, clear light,
like a little candle burning in the night.
In the world is darkness, so we must shine,
you in your small corner, and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine, first of all for him;
well he sees and knows it if our light grows dim.
He looks down from heaven to see us shine,
you in your small corner, and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine, then, for all around;
many kinds of darkness in this world abound:
sin and want and sorrow; so we must shine,
you in your small corner, and I in mine.

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination

(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

1 Samuel 3:1-10

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.

² At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. ³ 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.

⁴ Then the LORD called Samuel, and he said, "Here I am!" ⁵ 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.

⁶ 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."

⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

⁸ 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 boy. ⁹ 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.

¹⁰ And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."

Sermon

I want to start this week with a little story about a man who was seeking God. The man would spend his time under the fig tree telling God of all of his problems in this world, telling God of his needs and his desires.

He would always ask for God to speak to him. And the birds in the tree would sing, but the man did not hear them.

So, the man yelled out to God 'Speak to Me' and thunder rolled across the sky, but the man did not listen.

The man looked around and said, 'God just give me some sign, show me you are real' and the stars shone brightly, and the man did not notice them.

The man getting angry said, 'God, show me a miracle, prove yourself!' and a baby was born, but the man was unaware.

Finally, the man dried out in despair, 'Touch me God, let me know that you hear my pleas!' whereupon God reached down and touched him, but the man brushed the butterfly away and walked off.

Last week we spoke about sitting under the fig tree and communicating with God, telling him about everything that is going on in our lives, the good, the bad and even the ugly. However, communicating with God by speaking to him is only half of the process. Most of us have become very good at telling God all about our wants, all about our needs and all about what he can do for us. How often do we spend time listening to God?

Communication is a two-way street, it requires both speaking and listening, and in any relationship if you spend too much time talking and not enough time listening the relationship will not be strong.

We need to be careful to spend as much time listening and looking for God in our lives as we do telling him about our lives if we want to have a healthy relationship with Him.

The Bible even teaches us this. If we were to examine all of the Scripture that speaks to listening to God, we would be looking at more than 50 lines of scripture across the Old and New Testaments. Hear in Greek is 'Akouo', and it means to perceive, to understand or to discern the meaning of what is being said.

On top of that the phrase, 'He who has ears, let him hear' appears 14 times in the New Testament. Biblically the number 14 represents salvation and deliverance. The 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew month of Nisan is the Passover. The day that God's angel of death passed over the firstborn of Israel because they had painted their doorposts and mantels with the blood of the lamb.

Listening to God is probably the most prevalent issue in the world today. When we come to faith, we have communicate with God by both speaking to him and listening to him. And most times when we feel that God is not with us it isn't because God is not communication with us, it is because we are not listening to him.

The truth is that no matter how much people claim to love God, if we do not communicate with him, if we do not speak to him and listen to him there is no real relationship.

The Bible teaches us in Matthew:

Matthew 15:7-9

⁷ You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

⁸ " 'This people honors me with their lips,

but their heart is far from me;

⁹ in vain do they worship me,

teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' "

If we want to honor our relationship with God, we need to listen to him in our lives. So how are we meant to listen to God in our lives? There are people all over this world who claim to hear the voice of God, any many use this to justify their wrongdoings or to gain money, fame, and power. They are listening to men, listening to the world, and seeking out their own desires. So how do Christians listen to God?

The first step for us in learning how to listen to God is in learning to discern his voice from all of the other voices in our lives. And trust me there are lots of other voices in our lives that try to interfere with us listening to God.

The first is the voice of man. This is the easiest one for us to recognize, it is the audible voices we hear of all the people around us; it is the primary way in which all human beings communicate with one another. There are times that the voice of man will give us good and wise advice, and there are times it will not. We need to know that whenever the voice of man goes against the voice of God, we are always meant to dismiss the voice of man and listen and obey the voice of God. In the book of Acts when the apostles are told to stop preaching on Jesus, they discern the voice of man from the voice of God.

Acts 5:29

²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.

We must obey God, rather than men, there has never been a truer statement and if the voice of man was all that we had to overcome, life would be so easy, however there are many other voices in this world.

The voice of Satan is also prevalent in this world. Satan’s voice is recorded in the Bible three times, when he spoke to Eve in the Garden of Eden, then when he spoke to God about Job and finally when he tempted Jesus in the dessert. Every time that Satan speaks it is with the intent to lie, deceive and lead away from God. Satan’s voice is always contrary to the will of God.

This world is also filled with the voices of Satan’s minions, the devils and demons that serve him in this world. In the Gospels, Jesus confronts these evil spirits many times casting out the demons from people’s lives

Luke 4:33-34

³³ And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴ “Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.”

Philip tells of his time in Samaira where.

Acts 8:7

⁷ For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed.

And like Satan's voice, the voices of his minions always speak against the will of God.

Then there is our own voice, the voice of self. This is the one that has the most influence over each of us. However, we also need to know that this voice is often heavily influenced by the world we live in and while this is the voice we listen to the most, it should also be the one we most carefully discern. The Bible teaches us that.

1 John 2:16

¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

When our thoughts and our flesh align with the ways of the world, we should be cautious, we should go back to the Bible and see what the voice of God says.

The voice of God is a voice that will always lead you according to God's will.

Jesus said his sheep will know his voice.

John 10:3-5

³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

This is the work of the Holy Spirit in this world, to help Jesus's followers discern his voice in this world.

John 16:12-14

¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

The Holy Spirit helps us to understand when God is speaking to us, by helping us to discern the messages that we hear from all of the different voices in our lives and comparing them to the voice of God.

You do not go out and buy a new car without test driving it, you do not buy a new pair of shoes without trying them on. You should not do anything in your life without seeing

if it fits into the will of God. You need to compare, test, and check the fit of the voice against the voice of God in the Scripture. If a voice goes along with the will of God, you may freely partake, however when it goes against the will of God you need to resist and obey the Word of the Lord.

So how are we to respond when we hear God's voice in our lives?

First, we need to be receptive to God's voice in our lives. If we are not willing to listen, we will never be able to hear him speak. For many people this is a serious issue, they ask God for an answer or a sign and then blatantly ignore his answers and signs. Just like the man that we spoke of at the very beginning of the sermon. They ask and then ignore all of the voices that God sends to try to get them to see his answer, so that they can continue to live their life in the way that they wish.

The book of Hebrews warns of this. It warns of people that would harden their hearts against the Word of God.

Hebrews 3:15

15 As it is said,

"Today, if you hear his voice,

do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

Then we need faith to hear God's Word.

Once again, in the book of Hebrews it states.

Hebrews 11:6

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

We need to draw near to God to hear his voice.

Hebrews 4:2

² For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.

We need to be faithful to hear God's voice. There are millions and millions of people who experience the Word of God each and every day. Scripture is shared with them, people share the truth of who God is with them in words and deeds, yet they never hear the voice of God. This is because they do not want a relationship with God. Maybe it is because their hearts are hardened to God, or perhaps they are just more focused on the other voices of the world. Either way unless you have faith the Word of God will have no impact on your life.

Finally, we need to react the same way that Samuel did. In today's Scripture when Samuel hears a voice call his name, he reacts quickly, he does not dilly dally. He did not yet know that it was the voice of God, but he knew that he was being called.

Discernment is the ability to judge well; however spiritual discernment means to make decisions in accordance with the will of God. To make those decisions in our lives we need to be listening to the voice of God and not the other voices of this world, we need to be receptive to his voice, even when it says things we do not want to hear, we need to be people of faith, we need the Holy Spirit in us to help us understand the will of God and his call in our lives and finally we need to be responsive, we cannot just sit and wait for God to give us something we want to do, we need to be doing what he is calling us to do.

Which brings us to how we are called to answer the voice of God in our lives.

1 Samuel 3:8-10

⁸ 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 boy. ⁹ 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.

¹⁰ And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."

Samuel once he was able to discern that he was hearing the voice of God responded in humbleness and willingness. 'Speak, for your servant hears'.

Moses answered God in the very same way.

Exodus 3:4

⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

Abraham too

Genesis 22:11

¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

Jacob

Genesis 31:11

¹¹ Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am!'

Isaiah

Isaiah 6:8

⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."

Ananias

Acts 9:10

¹⁰ Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

I hope you are seeing a pattern here.

In the Scripture we read today Samuel was just a young boy when God spoke to him, he was completely unaware of how he was meant to respond to God's voice until Eli told him what to do. We need to teach people how to hear God's voice in this broken world, there are so many voices coming at each of us and discerning God's voice is difficult. We also need to teach people how to respond to God's voice, something that has been lost to many in the current church culture. We are blessed to have teachers here that spend time with the children each week not just entertaining them but helping them learn how to discern God's voice in their lives and how to respond to it when they hear it. Take a moment at lunch today and thank our teachers even if you have no children in our nursery or childcare.

For the adults I have a piece of Scripture from the book of Habakkuk that will help us hear the voice of God in this world

Habakkuk 2:1

**I will take my stand at my watchpost
and station myself on the tower,
and look out to see what he will say to me,
and what I will answer concerning my complaint.**

Habakkuk stood at his watch post the same way that Nathaniel sat under his fig tree. In conversation with God. He has a specific time set aside from the things of this world to spend time with God, to speak to and to listen to God. We need to slow down in this world, all of the chaos of our lives needs to be interrupted with a time of calm. When you are running from one place to the next, one event to the next, your mind is too distracted to discern the voice of God from all of the other voices that are demanding your focus and attention in this world. If we do not take time to separate ourselves from the world, we might miss what God is saying to us.

Christians need to spend time focused on God, and it needs to be for more than a single hour on Sundays. Find a way to fit sitting under a fig tree or standing at a watch post into your life.

The reality of this world is that God is always speaking to people, he is always calling all of creation back into relationship with him. Some people simply choose not to listen, they have no interest in God. Others do not hear him because they don't choose to want to or take time to understand the ways that he is speaking to them. Still others think God is not speaking to them because they cannot hear him, they are too busy in their lives, too distracted by the world, or think that the problem is God not speaking.

However, when you submit yourself to God, humbly and willingly you will begin to hear the voice of the Lord in your life. It is when we focus on Jesus, place God first in our lives that all of the other voices begin to fade away and the Voice of God becomes more prevalent in our lives.

The truth is that God has never stopped calling out to his people. The Bible speaks just as clearly today as it has through all of time. We just need to learn to be receptive, faithful, and responsive to his Word in our lives as we walk as the Salt and Light of His Word in this broken world.

Let us pray,

Guide Us by Your Word and Spirit

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of almighty God,
 send your Holy Spirit
 into our hearts
 through your Word,
 that he may govern and guide us
 according to your will,
 comfort us in all afflictions and misfortunes,
 lead and uphold us in your truth against all error,
 so that we may stand firm in your love
 and offer ourselves to do good works,
 and through the certain hope of your free grace
 be blessed forever;
 with the Father and the Holy Spirit
 you live and reign,
 forever and ever.
Amen.

Source: Die pommersche Kirchen-Ordnung und Agenda, p. 291

Hymn #690: "Fight the Good Fight" (V 1,2,4)

Fight the good fight with all your might;
 Christ is your strength and Christ your right;

lay hold on life, and it shall be
your joy and crown eternally.

Run the straight race through God's good grace;
lift up your eyes and seek God's face;
the way of life before you lies;
Christ is the path and Christ the prize.

Faint not nor fear, those arms are near,
and, changing not, still hold you dear;
hope and believe, and you shall find
Christ is your all: heart, strength and mind.

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewsperthoffering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message

Offertory Prayer **(Congregant Prepared)**

Closing Hymn #699: "All the Way My Saviour Leads Me"

All the way my Saviour leads me;
what have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt his tender mercy
who through life has been my guide?
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort,
here by faith in him to dwell;
for I know, whate'er befall me
Jesus doeth all things well.

All the way my Saviour leads me,
cheers each winding path I tread,

gives me grace for every trial,
 feeds me with the living bread.
 Though my weary steps may falter,
 and my soul athirst may be,
 gushing from the rock before me,
 lo, a spring of joy I see.

All the way my Saviour leads me,
 oh the fullness of his love!
 Perfect rest to me is promised
 in my Father's house above.
 When my spirit, clothed immortal,
 wings its flight to realms of day,
 this my song through endless ages,
 'Jesus led me all the way!'

Pastoral Prayer

God of purpose and promise,
 we open our hearts to you in prayer, trusting in your mercy to bear the burdens we carry.

We thank you for the work and witness of your Church,
 bringing your Good News into many lives and situations throughout the earth.
 Today we pray for congregations that are struggling financially,
 for all the churches caught up in conflict,
 and for all those church members who are tired and need your renewing Spirit.
 Guide them with your grace.

Lord, we thank you for the healing that comes from your hand, O God,
 in times of reconciliation when your forgiving love is at work,
 and in times when pain is eased and grief is comforted.
 Today we pray for those whose emotions are raw,
 for those whose bodies are weakened in this winter of sickness
 and for any whose minds are troubled in any way.
 Give them hope for new life with you.

We lift to you people around the world.
 who work for justice and unity to prevail in the midst of division:
 in nations where conflict has broken out or repression rules,
 in places facing poverty, famine, or destruction from disaster,
 and anywhere racial and ethnic disparities weaken common life.
 We pray for Canada in this time when resentments simmer and differences deepen.
 Send your justice to bring relief and your peace to help understanding prevail.

As the followers of Jesus, give us the courage to unite not only in prayer
but also, in action for the needs of this world.
Strengthen us to work together, despite our differences,
so, others may see what it means to follow you.

And as we gather together today in our time of fellowship lord,
We pray that you would bless the hands of all who prepared food for this meal
That you would bless our time together and
That your holy spirit would work in each of us,
Bringing us closer together with you and our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord,
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
As the one true living God,
Now and forever, **Amen.**

Benediction

May our Lord Jesus Christ,
the one who came with grace and truth,
fill your hearts with grace and truth,
as you serve him in the days ahead.
And may the joy of the Lord—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—
be your strength. Now and Forever. **Amen.**