

1 Samuel 3, the call of Samuel

Dramatic Reading

Turn out all lights in the church

powerpoint picture of the Ark of the Covenant on screen

Narrator: We have for you this morning a story, a story in the middle of the night, when the dark is most dark and the quiet is most quiet, “when all through the house not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.” But this was no ordinary house, for this was the house of God! In those times, in Israel, God’s holy presence rested in a holy box, about the size of our communion table, but covered in gold, pure, gleaming gold, and on the top two gold angels reached out their wings and God’s very presence lived there. The Ark of the Covenant literally pulsed with energy and sparks crackled between the angel wings. Most people were terrified to go near it, but Samuel was not afraid. He had served God since he was a little boy, and it was his job to look after the Ark, to tidy up the room it lived in, clean up. And at night, when everyone else had gone home, he lay his mat down and slept in the corner of the room.

But one night was different. One night God’s presence came out from the box, and God’s voice spoke and Samuel heard. Samuel was fast asleep, but through his dreams he heard his name being called:

God: Samuel! Samuel!
Samuel! Samuel!

Samuel: What? What? Eli? Is that you?

Narrator: Oh, I’d better tell you about Eli. Eli was the High Priest. He was in charge, and he had looked after Samuel as Samuel grew up. He was asleep in his room down the hallway. So when Samuel heard his name called he assumed it was Eli calling him. So he got up and ran down the hallway to Eli’s room.

Samuel: Here I am, Eli, what do you need?

Narrator: Only, Eli was fast asleep.

Eli: What? What? Samuel? What’s the matter?

Samuel: You called me.

Eli: No, I didn’t

Samuel: Yes, you did!

Eli: No, I did not. Go back to bed.

Narrator: So Samuel shrugged his shoulders and went back to bed and went back to sleep.

Then, a while later, it happened again.

God: Samuel! Samuel!

Samuel: What? What? Eli? Is that you?

Narrator: Samuel went back down the hallway, woke up Eli, just the same as before but this time they were both a bit more grumpy about it.

Samuel: You called me.

Eli: No, I didn't

Samuel: Yes, you did!

Eli: No, I did not. Go back to bed.

Narrator: The third time it was getting ridiculous

God: Samuel! Samuel!

Samuel: What? What? Eli? Is that you?

(goes to Eli) You called me.

Eli: No, I didn't

Samuel: Yes, you did!

Narrator: Finally Eli woke up enough to click onto what is really happening.

Eli: OK OK. Hang on a minute. You could clearly hear a voice calling you? And it wasn't me. So it must be God.

Samuel: God??!!

Eli: Yes, God.

Samuel: Crickey!

Eli: Indeed. Go back to bed. If it happens again, answer. Say "Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening."

Samuel: "Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening." OK, got that.

Narrator: So Samuel went back to bed, and sure enough:

God: Samuel! Samuel!

Narrator: and Samuel was really really brave and answered:

Samuel: Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.

Narrator: and God spoke to Samuel.

God: I am about to do something in Israel and when people hear of it their ears will tingle with astonishment!

Narrator: and God went on to tell Samuel what was going to happen to Eli and his very bad sons. And in the morning Samuel had to tell the very bad news to Eli and that was not easy.

But from that day on Samuel always felt close to God. God spoke again to Samuel, even when the holy box was nowhere near. So Samuel learned that God was not only in a box, not only in a holy room, or with the high priest, but God was alive inside his heart. And Samuel was a great leader of his people because he knew the voice of God, he knew the truth of God. And no matter what he would always say yes to God, always jump up and come when God called, always say to other people what God wanted to be said. Samuel knew that the energy of God can be a spark that crackles inside of us, giving us energy and inspiration.