# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

**“When God Calls”**

**1 Samuel 3:1-10**

**July 16, 2023**

This morning we will look at the story of God calling Samuel. By this time in the life of Samuel, he has lived in Shiloh for several years while serving Eli the priest in the Tabernacle of the Lord. Samuel’s birth had been an answer to prayer for his mother, Hannah, who for many years was unable to bear a child. In gratitude, after weaning the boy, she gave Samuel into God’s service. I invite you to join me in 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Meanwhile, the boy Samuel served the Lord by assisting Eli. Now in those days messages from the Lord were very rare, and visions were quite uncommon. One night Eli, who was almost blind by now, had gone to bed. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the Tabernacle near the Ark of God. Suddenly the Lord called out, “Samuel!” “Yes?” Samuel replied. “What is it?” He got up and ran to Eli. “Here I am. Did you call me?” “I didn’t call you,” Eli replied. “Go back to bed.” So he did. Then the Lord called out again, “Samuel!” Again Samuel got up and went to Eli. “Here I am. Did you call me?” “I didn’t call you, my son,” Eli said. “Go back to bed.” Samuel did not yet know the Lord because he had never had a message from the Lord before. So the Lord called a third time, and once more Samuel got up and went to Eli. “Here I am. Did you call me?” Then Eli realized it was the Lord who was calling the boy. So he said to Samuel, “Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, ‘Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went back to bed. And the Lord came and called as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel replied, “Speak, your servant is listening.”

How old were you when you first realized that God was calling you? The first time I remember knowing the truth of the hymn, “Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling, calling for you and for me,” I was ten years old, about the same age as Samuel. I have shared the story with you before of how I was attending a Christian summer camp and the speaker’s message about God helped me to realize that God was inviting me into a personal relationship with himself through his Son, Jesus Christ. Together with my parents and my Sunday School teachers, God used that camp speaker to get the message across to me that God was calling me by name. Unlike Samuel, I heard no audible voice, but it was just as real to me as it was to him.

For Samuel, it was the priest, Eli, who helped him to hear God’s call. For you, it may have been a parent, a Sunday School teacher or youth leader, a Christian author, a pastor, or a friend. But whoever God has used in our lives to help us hear his voice, the fact remains that each one of us who believes has been called by God. The initiative is always God’s. He first called our name, meaning he first knew us and loved us as individual persons, and then, often with the help of others used by God to help us understand who he is, we came to realize who was calling. And we replied. We heard his voice and we began to follow him.

There are those who hear about Jesus but they don’t respond. They’re like window shoppers who enjoy looking at whatever the store has to offer, but are unwilling to go in and make the purchase. Many think of Jesus as a good man, an impactful teacher, a moral person, or a religious leader, but they stop short of giving themselves to him. In the Gospel of John, in the tenth chapter, Jesus likens himself to a Shepherd and his followers to sheep who have heard his voice calling and followed him. He has invited them to be his sheep, but they must make a decision whether or not to follow, whether or not to accept that this Shepherd, this Son of God, knows them by name, loves them, and has not only life but an abundant life in mind for them.

In Matthew’s Gospel, the eleventh chapter, Jesus says: “Come to me all who are weary, and I will give you rest.” Some will hear and disregard the call; others will hear the call and follow. May we, like Samuel, be those who hear and follow, responding to God’s call with words similar to Samuel’s: “Speak, your servant is listening.”