



In the first reading for today’s Eucharist we have the story of God calling the boy Samuel to be a prophet. At first, Samuel cannot figure out what is going on. He is unable to recognize the voice that is speaking to him in the darkness. He does not understand that the voice he hears is God’s voice. However, the priest Eli finally figures out that the voice is God’s voice. So he tells Samuel that the next time he hears the voice he should say, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

God doesn’t always call the best, brightest, strongest or even the oldest. He calls those whom he chooses. He doesn’t call those who have gifts and skills to do his work; he calls those whom he chooses and then gives them the gifts and skills that they will need to do the work that he has given them.

Where do we hear God’s voice most clearly? We hear his voice most clearly and unambiguously in the Word and Sacraments. We hear it in the Word preached as Law and Gospel. We hear it in the sacramental life of the church in Baptism and the Eucharist. This is why it is so important to be present every Sunday for the Eucharist. It is in the Word and Sacraments that we are trained to recognize the voice of the Lord. But some will say, “But pastor, I don’t seem be able to hear God’s voice in the Word and Sacraments.” Well, where is the problem? Is it God or is it us?

The primary place we hear the voice of God is in the Word and Sacraments. But He also speaks to us in other ways.

Sometimes God speaks in to us in very dramatic ways. He spoke to Moses in the form of a burning bush. He spoke to St. Paul by knocking him off his horse with a blinding flash of light. He spoke to Samuel through a voice in the darkness. Yes, sometimes God is pretty dramatic.

Sometimes God speaks through people. You’d make a good teacher. You’d make a good doctor. You’d make a good business person. You’d make a good athlete. You’d make a good salesperson. You’d make a good carpenter, or plumber, or contractor. You’d make a good pastor.

Sometimes God’s speaks through questions. Would you help with a funeral lunch? Would you fill up this baby bottle with money for Cherish House? Would you sing in our Choir? Would you be a teacher in our Sunday school or confirmation program? Will you serve on our parish council? Will you be a lector? Will you faithfully use this set of offering envelopes? Will you be a participant in our LYO program?

How do we recognize the Lord’s voice? How do we discern his from the voice of other gods or even more importantly from demons?

There is a book called *Miracles of Miracles*. (1) It is a story of a girl who lived in Iran and grew up in a very devout Islamic family. As a matter of fact, her father was a Mullah. She began to

question a God who seemed to have no concern for humanity. Allah was only concerned with submission. Father told her not to question Allah. When she was in college she found a Bible. And read it. She read about a God called “Father.” She read about a God who was not only concerned with Law but also was concerned with mercy and grace.

She learned that one of her relatives was a Christian in secret. She went to that relative, got in touch with a secret church, received catechetical instruction and was baptized in secret. She then worshipped in secret. She met a fellow Christian and got married.

One day her pastor was arrested. He had a directory of church members and she and her husband’s name were in his directory. She and her husband had to leave the country. Why? Christians are persecuted in Iran. So they fled to Turkey, then to Spain, then to Netherlands, then to France and finally to the United States. They came to the United States not only for freedom, but for protection. When her father found out she was a Christian he disowned her and refused to speak to her, to talk to her on the phone, or to read any of the letters she wrote to him.

Ten years later she was pregnant with her first child. She wanted to tell her father, but she didn’t even know if he would talk to her. Well, she called her father on the phone. He was happy to hear her voice and she told him that she was going to have her first child.

Then her father told her an amazing story. He was at their farm in the country. He got locked out of his car, so he began looking for an extra set of keys. As he was looking for his extra set of keys he had a vision. It was a vision of a great white sheet, in which there were many loaves of freshly baked bread and he actually smelled freshly baked bread. But most importantly he heard a voice “I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall not thirst!” How did he, a Mullah, who never read a passage of scripture, know John 6? God had spoken to him. How do we know it was the Lord’s voice? It is because the voice was confirmed by God’s Word in St. John chapter 6.

Has God spoken to you? As sure as the sun rises and sets everyday He has spoken to you through the Word and Sacraments. He has spoken to you in dramatic ways. He has spoken to you through others. He has spoken to you through various questions. Yes, he has spoken to you. The only question that remains is, “How will you respond?” Will you say, “I don’t know your voice.” Or will you, with Samuel, say: “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

+Christo Gloria in Ecclesia +

1. *Miracle of Miracles* by Mina Nevisa

Illustration: Depiction of Eli and Samuel by John Singleton Copley, 1780 A.D,