

**Samuel! Samuel!**  
*January 15, 2012*  
(Epiphany 2 – Year B)  
1 Samuel 3: 1-10

*St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas*

“Samuel! Samuel!”

The voice pierces the night, waking the boy Samuel from his drowsy sleep on his cot in the temple.

Wiping his eyes, Samuel rolls out of bed to go and find the old priest, Eli - because Eli is calling him.

Samuel stumbles into the darkness of Eli's bedroom and rouses Eli from sleep.

Samuel whispers:

“Here I am, Eli.

You called me?”

Old Eli startles from a deep sleep.

In the darkness, Eli makes out the shadow of the boy and responds:

“I did not call you, Samuel.

Now go back to bed.”

So Samuel shuffles off to bed and settles back down underneath the covers.

Yet a few hours later:

“Samuel! Samuel!”

So Samuel rolls out of bed again to walk into Eli's room.

Eli is perturbed to be roused from a deep sleep again and barks:

“Boy, I did not call you.

Now get back to bed.”

So Samuel shirks sheepishly back to his bed.

“Samuel! Samuel!”

This time, Samuel walks briskly down the hall and into Eli's room.

He throws open the bedroom door in exasperation, shouting out:

“Here I am, Eli, for you called me...again.”

This third time, Eli sits up in his bed, scratching his head.

Eli thinks back upon all those stories of his ancestors, stories of when

God spoke to the people.  
Eli remembers stories of God speaking to Noah and to Abraham to  
Moses.  
Yet that was back in Bible times and God didn't seem to really talk to  
people anymore.  
Yet just to be safe, Eli stares at the boy Samuel and instructs him:  
"Boy: Go and lie down.  
And if the voice calls you again, I want you to say this:  
"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

So Samuel does as he is told.  
He goes to the bathroom, gets a drink of water, then heads back to bed.  
And sure enough:  
"Samuel! Samuel!"

Yet this time, Samuel does not get out of bed to go and find Eli.  
This time, Samuel stares up at the ceiling with the blanket pulled up  
tight around him.  
And with tears in his eyes, Samuel replies:  
"Speak, Lord, for your servant listening."

And a voice rings in Samuel's head saying:  
"I am going to tell you something, Samuel, that will make the ears of  
everyone tingle:  
Eli and his sons are going to be punished because Eli's sons are corrupt  
priests in my temple."

For the rest of the night, Samuel stares up at the ceiling, until the rays of  
the morning sunrise come through the curtains in his bedroom.  
Samuel felt afraid - and yet filled with peace - all at the same time.

You see, the voice called Samuel to go to Eli and to tell him horrible  
news,  
News that would make ears tingle,  
News that Eli's family of priests was a house of cards that would fall  
down.  
Samuel had been called to tell Eli this news.  
For Samuel was called by the voice of God.

The Latin word for the word 'call' is the word 'vocare.'  
'Vocare' is the word from which we get the word 'vocation.'

All of us are called.

All of us are called by a voice, calling us to a vocation.

A vocation can be different than an occupation.

An occupation is the way that we make a living, such as the occupation of a banker or the occupation of a plumber.

Yet a vocation is more than an occupation.

A vocation is a calling.

And vocation starts with a voice:

A voice that makes us afraid - and yet peaceful - all at the same time.

Several years ago, another male priest and myself led a weekend retreat at Camp Allen for men in our Diocese of Texas.

The title of the retreat was "Men of God."

We must have had 50 to 60 men at this retreat, men of all ages.

I have found that, in leading men's retreat, that sometimes it is helpful to break men up into small groups of diverse ages.

For other topics, it is helpful to break men up into small groups of similar ages.

In the discussion about vocation and calling, I divided the men into groups of 4, into small groups of similar ages.

And I asked each group of men to discuss this question:

"What is God calling me to do?"

As the men were discussing this question, I noticed that the group of men in their 30s and 40s had become quite serious and they had distressed looks on their faces.

I approached this group of guys and inquired what was going on.

One of the men replied:

"Jeff, all of us in this group know exactly what we are called by God to do.

Chris over here feels called to open up a scuba diving shop.

Joe over here feels called to quit his job and go to nursing school.

And Brandon feels called to learn sign language and work with the deaf.

Each one of the four of us knows exactly what we are called by God to do with our lives.

But none of us – none of us – are doing what we are called to do, Because we are afraid.”

“Samuel! Samuel!”

A voice calls to us - to not live from a place of fear.

A voice calls to us - to live with courage, courage to follow our call.

A voice calls to us - until our ears tingle with the news of a gutsy, courageous life in Jesus.

Clergy are not the only people who hear the voice.

All of us are called by God to lead a life that is scary - and yet peaceful - all at the same time.

Some are called by the voice of God to get up every morning and teach school.

Some are called to volunteer at the Humane Society, cleaning poop out of animal cages.

Some are called to do pro bono legal work for the poor or to give money away recklessly.

Some are called to teach Godly Play, to serve on the vestry, to sing in the choir, to plant flowers in the courtyard, to make mac ‘n cheese for Furaha Friday.

And some are called to just sit at their breakfast table each morning at 6am, with a cup of coffee and a prayer list, courageously offering up prayers each day.

And we know that it is the voice of God who is calling us –

When that voice makes our ears tingle –

And when we feel afraid - and peaceful - all at the same time.

Samuel! Samuel!

*{silence}*

Speak, Lord - for your servant is listening.