

In our first lesson today, the Lord said to Samuel, “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle.”

Have you ever heard of God accomplishing something that made both of your ears tingle? What would God have to do to make your ears tingle?

And how would God accomplish ear-tingling things?

I have a theory, so listen up!

When I was a teen-ager, Saturday morning was chore day. And my siblings and I always wanted to sleep in. That’s when my father would turn on his stereo system, the one he’d wired with speakers throughout the house, and crank this Imperials song up at full volume:



Did you ever hear God, speaking to you,
saying “I got a job to do,
and I’ll sure be needing you,
if it ever gets done?”



I would bolt awake, sit upright in bed, each and every week, with groans and rolling eyeballs, to the realization that the Powers That Be—at least in my household—wanted something from me. And there was that not-so-subtle reminder, somehow, that I owed my very existence, not just room and board and clothes and everything else—to the one who had given me life.

Something of the sort happened to the boy Samuel in our first lesson today. Like me and my siblings, Samuel also was living in a place of privilege: The Lord’s House. In my case, our house was literally attached to the church. There was a door on the back wall of the altar that led into our living room. In Samuel’s case, his barren mother had promised to give her first-born to the Temple if God would give her a child. That child, Samuel, was now 11 or so, we reckon, and he was servant to Eli, the High Priest and next-to-last Judge of Israel. Eli slept next to the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple, whereas Samuel slept next door.

And, apparently, God had a dirty job for Samuel to do: God wanted the boy to tell his mentor that he was to become judge in Eli’s place. Why did God want to oust Eli? Not because he was old, although he

was. Not because he was blind, although he was. And not because Eli's sons, both priests themselves, were evil—although they were. God was replacing Eli with the boy Samuel because Eli knew his sons were committing grievous wrongs in the Temple and Eli hadn't done anything about the situation.

So, God spoke to Samuel. God called to Samuel. God had a job for Samuel to do. The reality is, God is always calling us to do things that should make people's ears tingle. God apparently had called Eli to deal with his evil sons. But Eli let God's word "fall to the ground." Now God was calling Samuel. God spoke directly to him in a voice Samuel knew and trusted, a voice so much like Eli's voice that Samuel got up and ran to Eli over and over again to see what his mentor wanted.



This child was willing. No groans. No eye rolls. Samuel just went to Eli, who finally recognized what was happening and told Samuel what to do. "When God calls again," Eli said, "say, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'"

Listening to what God wants, when God speaks, is step one of three in the three-step process of becoming the hands,

voice, and heart of God in our community and in our world. Step one is listening. And here are a few hints in addition to Eli's instruction about how to listen for what God is calling you to do: Slow down. Sit down. Lie down. Turn down the volume. Turn off whatever's on. Then say, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening."

Step two is deciding. Is this a God-task, or my own idea? Will this task help someone? Will it promote the dignity of others? If we decide it is a God-task, we take the final step: we act.

Notice that deciding whether we are qualified to carry out God's task isn't part of the decision process. "God doesn't call the fit; instead, God makes fit those he calls." This saying was a great comfort to me during seminary, because the reality is that no one is fit to do what God wants them to do. And if we were somehow already "fit" to do God's will, we would get confused and think that WE were the ones able to do whatever miraculous task God gives us to do. Ut uh: God calls the un-fit and makes them able to do his work so that we will know, so that all will know, this is something God achieved, not us.

"You want me to clean the toilet, Lord? In the middle of the night? Sure thing; I don't know why you need it done now, but I'll get right on it."

"You want us to build affordable housing, Lord? Don't you know any developers? Property lawyers? Low-income housing tax credit experts? Younger people? Richer people? What's that? We

have everyone, and everything, needed to do what you are asking us to do? And you'll keep us together? Well, OK, we'll give it a shot."

Throughout, we continue to ask: "Am I still doing your will, Lord, or have I veered off your path onto my own way? Is everything provided to do the task? Do I get more energy, overall, than I give by doing it? Does this task, as hard as it is, give me life satisfaction, if not joy?"

So, like Samuel, we get up out of our comfort and we do this hard thing God is asking us to do. And, in the end, whatever comes of our actions to do God's will, remember this scripture lesson today:

The Lord has acted, and we are but his servants.

Let him do what seems good to him, and

let both ears of everyone who hears of it tingle.