



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

July 21, 2013

Pentecost 9

Sermon Text: [1 Samuel 3:1-10](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [1 Samuel 3:1-10](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 122](#)

Second Lesson: [Colossians 3:12-17](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 10:38-42](#)

### **The Believer Follows Christ: Followers of Christ Listen When God Speaks**

An amazing gift from God  
An amazing privilege from God

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

After worship this morning, we have the voters' meeting over at the school. One of the things that will be presented there is something from the Staffing Committee. They put together and compiled all the responses from the Priority in Ministry listening meetings that we had. There is a condensed version...8 pages. Then there is a full version of 36 pages or something like that where you can read everything that everyone wrote if you'd like. The men have been compiling it into different categories and working with it and putting it together. One thing I noticed as I was going through it all is that people said one of the greatest threats to our congregation's ministry at this time was finances. But as of July 16<sup>th</sup> or maybe the 17<sup>th</sup>, that's all changed. Finances are really no longer an issue for the ministry of our congregation.

I don't know if you noticed it, but July 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup>, that was the day that Monopoly started again at McDonald's. This year, the \$1 million ticket is only going to be found on a Big Mac box. (*Pastor holds up a Big Mac box and points to Monopoly game pieces on box.*) Right there it is. You don't believe me? (*Pastor pulls off one Monopoly game piece from box.*) Okay, right here it is. (*Pastor pulls off second Monopoly game piece from box.*) Okay, so there still are financial challenges in the ministry of our congregation.

I don't know if you listened closely to the readings this morning, but I think our Lord would tell us that's not the biggest thing that is going to make us successful as a congregation. What Jesus said to Martha was "Martha, you're worried about a lot of stuff, but there is only one thing of the few things in life that are important. There is only one thing that is truly needed." He wasn't talking about \$1 million. He was talking about the Word of God.

I think if Christ is going to answer our question, what is the biggest thing we need so that as a congregation we thrive, he would say "More people listening to the Word of God," wouldn't he?

It's rare, there's only one \$1 million ticket. At the time of Samuel and Eli, it was rare that the Lord spoke to people. It said Samuel did not yet know the Lord. Not know him

as believe in him, he did that, but he didn't know him from God talking directly to him as he would through the rest of his life because Samuel became a prophet and a judge who led God's people. He communicated God's Word to God's people from the visions and the direction that God gave him the rest of his life. But at that point in time in 1 Samuel 3, what I read to you, it was rare. It was like a \$1 million winning ticket. So when you think about that, it maybe ought to open our eyes to see how blessed we are.

It's not a rarity for you to come across what God wants to say to you, is it? We have big print Bibles, little print Bibles, Bibles you can put in your pocket, Bibles you can put on your phone, Bibles you can put on your tablet, Bibles you can put on your computer, Bibles you can put in a DVD player, Bibles you can put into a VHS player, maybe even Beta if you still have that, Bibles you can put on CDs, Bibles you can put everywhere, right? An MP3, you can put it on your iPod Touch when you go for your morning walk or whatever you might do. It's not rare for you and me to be able to hear what God wants us to hear. But the question becomes, because it's so prevalent, do we at times become apathetic to it? Do we need to learn again the attitude of Samuel...Speak O Lord, your servant is listening. Because that's what the believer does. The believer listens to God's Word when God speaks. That is the mark of the believer who follows Christ.

Remind yourself again this morning that this is an amazing gift that God gives to us. This is an amazing privilege that God gives to us. As we think about it, maybe we will see how amazing it is that we get to do this.

We read that from Samuel. You know this story. I'm guessing you've heard the calling of Samuel before. Samuel was a young boy whose mother had prayed for him and said, "I'll let him serve you the rest of his life." And that's what she did. He stayed in the Tabernacle. She went home. He stayed and helped Eli minister.

Not only was the Word of God rare at that time or visions from God rare at that time, but it seems like serving God faithfully was kind of rare at that time. Eli was the high priest and he didn't serve God all that faithfully within his own dysfunctional family with his sons and their problems that were going on at the Tabernacle.

But also, I don't know if you caught this when I read it to you a little while ago about where it said Eli's eyes were getting bad. He was getting older. He was laying down in his usual place and the lamp of God had not yet gone out. That phrase "the lamp of God had not yet gone out" really tells us that serving the Lord faithfully was not a real big priority. The lamp of God that had not yet gone out was the lamp, the candlesticks, the lamp stand that was in the Holy Place in the Tabernacle. It was never supposed to go out. It was always supposed to be lit as a reminder that God lived among his people. But evidently a good night's sleep had become more important than doing what the Lord had said. That's never happened to you, has it?

So when God came and called Samuel, Samuel didn't know what was going on. That's understandable. He goes to Eli thinking Eli is calling him to do something or get him

something. Who knows what? It happens again and again and again. Finally it dawns on Eli that this is the Lord. Eli instructs Samuel to say things that really should be a motto of our Christian life...“Speak Lord. Your servant is listening.” This eager desire to hear from God, this eager desire to know what’s on his mind, and this desire, this stated desire to just be quiet and listen, that’s a challenge, isn’t it? The “be quiet and listen to God” part of it, that’s a challenge for us, isn’t it?

I don’t know if any of you had trouble learning to read growing up. One of the problems that people have when they are learning to read is when they switch words around. Dyslexia, isn’t that what it’s called? That makes it hard. That can really goof you up on trying to get the message if that’s happening to you.

I think sometimes as Christians we live with a form of Spiritual Dyslexia when it comes to “Speak Lord, your servant is listening.” I think sometimes you and I want to change it around to “Listen Lord, your servant is speaking,” don’t we? Instead of listening to what God has said in Scripture and hearing the answer to many of the things we struggle with that is already given to us there, we don’t take the time to do that. Instead, we are too busy telling God what he should be doing. Praying is something God certainly wants us to do. That’s next week’s topic. But the attitude, “God, you better listen up because I’m speaking to you and you better do what I say or else it’s going to prove to me that you don’t love me and you don’t care for me and I’m going to get mad and go away and wander away from you because you haven’t done what I wanted you to do,” that is not the attitude that the Christian wants to have. We want that humble attitude of “Speak Lord, your servant is listening,” because it’s an amazing thing that God would stop to speak to us.

Isn’t it absolutely fascinating that the One who said “Let there be” and there was takes the time to communicate to us what he wants us to know. Maybe some of you have at home, tucked away in one of the drawers, wrapped up in a rubber band or something, love letters from your sweetheart. Maybe you go back and read them again from time to time. Maybe you are just going to leave them there until someday when the kids are cleaning it out after you’ve gone to heaven so they can read them. But do you understand, that’s what Scripture is? That’s God’s love letter to us, what he wants us to know above all else. The one thing needed that he wants us to know. What an incredible gift!

We don’t have to worry about what God wants us to do to be right with him. He’s told us. He says, “I’ve done it all.” We don’t have to think, “Maybe God, whoever he is, would be happier with us if we start sacrificing people in fire or cut their beating heart out.” We don’t have to think about that because he said, “No. Here’s love. This is love. I loved you and gave my life for you. I gave you the gift of faith. You have done nothing. I have done it all.” That’s what he says to us again and again and again. If you or I grow weary of that or grow apathetic toward that, that’s a big us problem, isn’t it?

This is the most amazing thing in the world...our God loves us. Our God desires to be with us. Our God gave himself for us. Yet, you and I can get so busy doing the things we can see and focus on, that you and I don't always find the time to listen. Sometimes even when we make the time and sit down, our mind wanders. We don't listen quite closely. We wander and think about other things or something happens. Some of you are probably still thinking about a Big Mac and haven't heard a word I've said since then. That's how we are, right? We get distracted really easily.

That's why Christ came. Anytime that we don't love him and his word, it's sin. It doesn't matter that I can find someone else that does it less often than I do. That's not what God says to do. It doesn't matter that you might get to worship more often than someone else does. God doesn't say to be better than someone else. He says, "Be holy as I the Lord your God am holy." We are not even close, are we? That's why when Christ came to this earth, not only did he sit at the feet of those guys in the temple when he was 12 years old and ask them all those questions and listen to the Word and grow in the Word, not only did he go to the synagogue regularly and teach the Word and share the Word, he did all that perfectly in our place because you and I can't do it. That's his love. That's his gift.

The privilege we have now is to see in his Word that he did that for us. The privilege we have now is to spend more time getting to know him better. We have opportunities to do it. It just becomes a matter of, do I treasure it? Am I going to make time for it?

It was a hot week this last week, right? You probably lost your appetite during the heat, didn't you? I'm betting that everyone of you hear still made time to eat, didn't you? You might not have eaten as much because of the heat, but you still found time to eat. Even as the sweat ran down the small of your back, you still chewed and swallowed. Your faith needs that same strength. It needs that same food. It needs that Word of God.

Like I said before, there are all kinds of ways you can get it. You can get it together with other Christians. You can get it on your own. But by all means, get it. Dig into it and realize how amazing it is that it isn't rare anymore, that anytime, any place, you can sit down and listen to what God wants to whisper in your ear. But it is fun, and it is cool to get together with other Christians and bounce ideas off each other and grow in faith together as you discuss God's Word.

I'm kind of excited about an opportunity that we are going to start this fall. This fall in September we are going to start on Sunday nights a Today's Light Bible. It's a plan to read through the whole Bible in two years. You read six days a week, and on the seventh day, on Sunday, we will get together in the evening and talk about what we read so we can see what other people found interesting or what they didn't understand. And we can maybe grow together. But even if you can't make it to those classes, you can still read along with us. Then in the summer months, we'll do it on Sunday mornings. And over the next two years, we'll have the opportunity to talk about every last verse in the Bible. I think that's pretty cool. I think that's a neat opportunity. So

whether you can join us at those times, once in awhile, or whenever you can, great. But otherwise you can still do it on your own at home. Then instead of afterwards just talking about how the weather stunk last week, we can talk about how great our God was this last week and the new things you learned about with each other.

Speak Lord, your servants are listening. Amen.