

Second Sunday of Year B

The story of Samuel (1 Sam 3:1-4:1) is a familiar one.

But it can still spur us on to a renewed, or more wholehearted, response to God's will for us.

Samuel, we are told, *had as yet no knowledge of the Lord*.

Maybe that was because he had never really listened to the voice of God before.

He had heard and attended to many other voices, but not the voice of God.

Like Samuel we can be engaged in other matters that call for our attention - sometimes very urgently.

But if we allow ourselves become pre-occupied with many things, or with other persons - however important - then we will not hear God's voice clearly.

Even if we are used to listening and responding to God's prompting it is always possible for us to become hard of hearing again:

The responsibilities, the worries, the plans that we have can crowd in upon our consciousness and smother the voice of God.

Like Samuel we have to make an effort to attend on God.

Like him we must go to a place where we can be free of distraction for a while.

That might be in our house, or we may need to go away to somewhere quiet: a 'retreat'.

And we must persevere in our listening even when the voice does at first not seem to be speaking to our hearts.

We can certainly be caught by surprise sometimes when we suddenly hear it close at hand, clear as a bell.

Maybe the Lord is summoning us to a duty we would rather not undertake.

Perhaps it is this deep-seated unwillingness in our hearts that has muffled the voice of God.

So our disposition has to be a co-operative one.

We must be trusting – and sometimes such trust is not easily attained.

Indeed, it is a grace for which we should pray:

that we can hear, and respond to God's call.

The words *Here I am* express such a spirit.

These three words can form the entire content of our prayer

We can repeat them slowly and earnestly over and again in our heart and mind.

Every word of God is for our good.

Every word is creative and redemptive and sanctifying.

We should not pick and choose, although it is possible that we do just that.

It is easy to accept, and look for, the comforting words.

It is less easy to hear and respond to the challenging words.

And we positively resist the corrective word.

Of course this was the case with the people in the Gospel stories and it is the same with us:
We run to Jesus when we are in need;
or we keep our distance if we are afraid of what he might ask of us;
or we try to smother or resist the word if it calls for a change in our ways.

But every word that comes from the mouth of God has a truth for us -
a truth that we need to know and to live by.

Samuel, we learn, *let no word of the Lord fall to the ground.*
That too is a recommendation for us.

It is certain that a personal regeneration will take place if we try to be open to God's every word. And God's word may come to us in a variety of ways:
deep in our hearts;
or in the Scriptures when we read them or hear them;
or through the remarks or urgings of a close friend or family member or colleague at work.

That word may be one of comfort, or challenge, or criticism.

But whatever it is we must trust the beneficence of God.

As Eli said to Samuel later on in this story: *Nothing of what God says must be kept back*
It is all for our growth, all for our good.

Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.