

John Ormsby – Sermon Notes  
25 July 2021

The Last Judge, Samuel.  
1 Samuel: 3

I want to revisit Judges this morning. Not the last chapter of Judges which makes for pretty gruesome reading but I want to deal with the last judge who of course was Samuel. After Samuel we have Saul who was the first King. The Lord Raises Up Samuel as a Prophet.

This OT story comes follows the book of Judges. The history of this period details a gradual decline in spiritual life amongst the people of Israel. By the end of Judges, the situation is dire and the beginning of 1 Samuel relates the story of the high Priest Eli and his very wicked sons Hophni and Phinehas. The priesthood had reached its lowest ebb. From the first chapter of this book We know that Samuel's mother Hannah was desperate for a child, and God was desperate to find a new leader.

When Hannah made her promise to God the solution had been found.

Have you ever Considered to think that by saying yes to God that you could be fulfilling one of his Needs?

Chapter 3 commences by saying that Samuel as a young boy ministered or served the Lord under Eli - but the word of the Lord was rare there was no vision or word from the Lord. A very sad state a very dangerous state. When you get to the end of this chapter we read "the lord continued to appear at Shiloh and there he revealed himself to Samuel. And Samuels word came to all Israel from Dan in the north beer sheba.

This morning I want to trace the steps of how this this young boy grew to become One of Israel's greatest prophets and leaders and the lessons we can learn from it.

The first thing was that he had the best start possible - a mother who promised to give her son to God for life. She was over the moon at being pregnant and was thankful to God. It has been well documented how the mother's emotional state will affect the baby growing in her. In a book published some years ago Dr Thomas Verney (the secret life of the unborn child) says that a friendly or hostile womb creates Personality and character pre-dispositions in the unborn child. Samuel had a kick start to his spiritual Life because of his mother's attitude. So expectant mothers have an awesome opportunity to have significant input into their unborn child before it is born.

Tragically today our laws give licence to the opposite, Psalms tell us that children are a heritage from the Lord. Heritage - our unique sense of family, physically socially & spiritually.

Secondly in v1 it says that Samuel ministered before the Lord. Which meant that he learned to serve. Nobody who is significant in God's kingdom has even got there Without learning to serve. Doing the humble things, the things that nobody sees, Except God who sees anything and everything. When our serving comes out of knowing God's love for us that is a great opportunity to grow. Learning to put other's needs before our own, to sit on the hard stool instead of the comfy chair we are learning valuable lessons in humility and service. There is no shortcut to effective leadership, before anyone leads, they need to learn to serve first.

Thirdly it says in v3, that Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord where the ark of the Lord was. The ark of the Lord was the symbol of God's presence. Every Israelite knew that the ark was kept in the inner sanctum, the holy of holies, but none the less it is still mentioned here. Nothing in the bible is there by accident. It is as if that Samuel even wanted to sleep close to the presence of God. He had a hunger for God's presence. How hungry are we for God's presence? At times I have prayed when I haven't been hungry Lord I want to be hungry for you. Nobody can make us want to want God, that comes from us. But we can ask for it. "blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled". As the Psalmist says in ps 42 "as the deer pants for the water so my soul longs after you." Are you hungry for his presence?

Fourthly Samuel hears the voice of God. At the beginning when God first spoke to Samuel he didn't recognise God's voice so he went to Eli to ask why he was calling him 3 times. Then even Eli realised what was going on, God was calling the boy. So, he told Samuel what to say. When God called him the 4th time Samuel said speak Lord for your servant is listening. Then God told the young boy what he was going to do and the judgement that would come on Eli and his family. We don't hear God Because We are smart or through our own ability or because we are theologically learned. Samuel was only a boy but his heart was turned towards God. So, God was able to speak to him.

First time God really speaking to me telling me to go to bible college. I didn't know where it would lead, marriage partner and overseas as a missionary. One of the important marks of maturity is being able to hear God speak to us. Many ways he chooses, but you come to know when he is speaking. But Hearing God speaking normally takes time spent in his presence.

Lastly, when Samuel heard God speaking he didn't hide it. It was not an easy message for a young boy to hear, a Message of Judgement on his mentor. He must have feared meeting and talking to Eli in the morning. But when Eli asked him he gave the full message. We shouldn't edit or censor God's word or listen to it with blinkers or be selective in our response. Obedience is important, but it should flow out of our response to his love for us. If you love me you will keep my commandments.

What was the outcome? God was with Samuel and raised him up to speak to the entire Israelite nation from north to south. Samuel didn't get everything right. He made the wrong choice when he visited Jessie to select a new king to replace Saul. When he saw the first-born Eliab, Samuel thought surely this strapping man must be the new king. Surely our country is in desperate need of such a leader today. Those who know the ways of the Lord. But wherever God has placed us we can hear his voice and respond in loving obedience. We can bring God's word to the community and work places that is around us even if it is most importantly we can bring to our own families. Hunger for his presence, learn to hear his voice practice walking in obedience.

And may the word of the Lord come to be heard from North cape to Bluff in our land. Heritage is our unique sense of family identity physically and socially but also spiritually.