**LISTENING TO THE LORD**

**I SAMUEL 3:1-11a**

 You are driving a bus. You go east 12 miles, and turn south and go 2 miles and take on 9 passengers, and then you turn west and go 3 miles and let off 4 passengers. How old is the bus driver?

 The clue to this teaser was a simple, three letter word that starts the whole question off. “***YOU are the bus driver.***”

 How often is it though that we have this same problem with listening in real life?

 Listening is so important in life and crucial to make relationships work. We all have built into us the need and want to be listened to. Being listened to communicates things like worth, value, love, and respect.

 How do you feel when you are pouring your heart out to a parent or a friend and then find out that they weren’t listening to you? You feel *hurt*, *upset*, and like they *don’t care* about you.

 Listening is so important and yet we live in a day and age where there are so many distractions to listening that it makes it more and more difficult to do.
\*\*\*Ask the youth what distracts them most from listening\*\*\*

 So many people talk about prayer and reading the Bible and serving and all the other great and wonderful things; but not a lot of people talk about **listening** to God.

 Again, listening is so important to any relationship, and that includes our relationship with Jesus.

 And in some ways, I would argue that it is even more important because I think the God of the Universe and the Creator of all things is someone to pay attention to when He speaks. How often do we *read* our Bibles, which as we talked about last week is the Word of God, but yet just have it **go in one ear and out the other**?

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 How often do we pray by just throwing up all these requests to God but yet never take them time to listen to what He may want to say?
 For our time tonight, I want to look at a passage in 1 Samuel 3:1-10 that will give us some insight to listening to God in our lives.

 Notice what verse one says again. “In those days messages from the Lord were very rare, and visions were quite uncommon.”

 4 reasons we miss God’s Message.

**I. WE ARE TOO BUSY**

Psalm 46:10a, “*Be still, and know that I am God:*”

 Notice that God doesn’t speak to Samuel in the busyness of the day but instead at night as he is lying down to go to bed.

**II. WE ARE FOCUSED ON THE WRONG THINGS**

 I think a lot of the times, if we thought about God speaking to us we tend to think of everything in grand terms. Meaning like there would be *flashes* of lighting and *booms* of thunder and clouds and smoke that would accompany God’s message to us. There would be angels *singing* and trumpets *blasting* and all these other things that would make us sit up and take notice going, “*Ok, God. You got my attention.*”
 Notice again, that this is not the way God speaks to Samuel. Instead, he calls out to him quietly in the night.

 Sometimes God does use dramatic things to get our attention – he speaks to **Moses** from a burning bush, he speaks to a guy named **Balaam** through is donkey and he speaks to **Mary** through angels. But, more often than not, they are the exceptions and instead, God speaks to us in quite and simple ways.
 There is a great story in 1 Kings about a prophet named Elijah who is on a mountain top waiting for God to come so that they could speak. As he is on the mountain and “mighty windstorm hits the mountain” but yet God was not in the wind. After that there was an earthquake, but again God was not in the earthquake.

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After that there was fire but again, no God. Finally, there was a gentle whisper and at that Elijah came out of the cave he was waiting in and spoke to God.

**III. WE HAVE FORGOTTEN WHAT GOD SOUNDS LIKE**

 This is especially hard if we are not spending any time with Him. Samuel didn’t recognize God’s voice because he had never heard it. It took God calling 3 times for him to finally realize, thanks to Eli, what was going on.
 Think of it this way, the best way to learn a foreign language like Spanish is **repetition** and spending time listening to it and repeating what you hear. If you do that for a time and then take a break for a while, coming back to it can be difficult because you don’t remember everything.

 I think it works the same way with us listening to God. If we are not spending the time reading His words and hanging out with Him, His words and language will become foreign to us and we will miss things because we don’t understand anymore.

**IV. WE SIMPLY DON’T WANT TO**

 God calls out to Samuel, he doesn’t just start speaking.

 He finally delivers the message when Samuel responds to God and says, “*Speak, your servant is listening.*”

 Samuel could have chosen – out of fear, out of not wanting to know what God had to say, or any other reason – to just ignore God but instead he choose to respond and purposefully listen to what God had to say.

**CON:**

 I Samuel 3:11a, “*And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel,*”

 A Native American and his friend were in downtown New York City, walking near Times Square in Manhattan. It was during the noon lunch hour and the streets were filled with people.

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Cars were honking their horns, taxicabs were squealing around corners, sirens were wailing, and the sounds of the city were almost deafening.
Suddenly, the Native American said, “*I hear a cricket.*”
 His friend said, “*What? You must be crazy. You couldn’t possibly hear a cricket in all of this noise!*”
 “*No, I’m sure of it,*” the Native American said. “*I heard a cricket.*”
 “*That’s crazy,*” said the friend.
 The Native American listened carefully for a moment, and then walked across the street to a big cement planter where some shrubs were growing. He looked into the bushes, beneath the branches, and sure enough, he located a small cricket.

 His friend was utterly amazed. “*That’s incredible,*” said his friend. “*You must have super-human ears!*”
 “*No,*” said the Native American. “*My ears are no different from yours. It all depends on what you’re listening for.*”
 “*But that can’t be!*” said the friend. “*I could never hear a cricket in this noise.*”
 “*Yes, it’s true,*” came the reply. “*It depends on what you’re listening for. Here, let me show you.*”
 He reached into his pocket, pulled out a few coins, and discreetly dropped them on the sidewalk. And then, with the noise of the crowded street still blaring in their ears, they noticed every head within twenty feet turn and look to see if the money that tinkled on the pavement was theirs.
 “*See what I mean?*” asked the Native American. “*It all depends on what you’re listening for.*”
 If you’ve tuned in to God, it doesn’t matter what’s going on around you, you can hear Him speak.

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