

Sunday School Notes 21 July 2019 (1 Samuel 3 and Luke 10: 38 – 42)

Last week we heard a story Jesus told. This week we hear a story that Jesus would have been told – one of the famous stories from Jewish history, the story of young Samuel.

Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. They lived far away from where God was worshipped at Shiloh, but went up every year to make a sacrifice to God. And every year, Peninnah teased Hannah about the fact that she had no children. In those days people believed that having no children meant that God was not pleased with one so Peninnah thought she was more special to God.

One year Hannah went into the worship area and prayed, weeping, that God would give her a son. She promised that she would give that son back to God, to serve him all his life. God blessed her and sure enough Hannah fell pregnant. In time a little boy, Samuel, was born. And when he was old enough to understand and to manage without her, she took him up to the tabernacle and left him there with Eli. Although she would have missed him – she would only see him once a year - she sang a triumphant and beautiful song of praise to God thanking God for his help.

Little Samuel would have learnt to do simple jobs – like cleaning the candlesticks, sweeping out the tent, running messages and even ushering in the worshippers. But most of all he would have been taught about God.

One night when Samuel was in bed he heard someone call him. He knew Eli couldn't see very well and rushed through to see what Eli needed. But Eli hadn't called him. So Samuel went back to bed. No sooner had he lain down again when the voice called again: "Samuel, Samuel". He rushed through to Eli, convinced that this time Eli *had* called him. But no! Eli simply sent him back to bed again. Then a third time, Samuel heard himself being called and again went through to Eli. This time Eli realised that it was God calling Samuel and explained that, if he heard the voice again, Samuel must answer God: "Speak Lord for I am your servant and I am listening."

And then Samuel heard God speaking. It was a bit scary because God gave him some very bad news for Eli. But it was the beginning of a great adventure for Samuel because after that night God spoke to him again and again with messages for the people. Samuel became God's prophet and priest for the people.

Imagine what would have happened if Samuel had just turned over and refused to go to Eli. He would have lost out on so many adventures and so many opportunities to serve God.

Jesus didn't just hear this story. He remembered it and got wisdom from it. One day when Jesus was visiting friends in Bethany, two sisters had a quarrel. Mary and Martha, were very different. Martha liked to do things and Mary liked to listen to stories and to big ideas. On this day Martha got fed up with Mary for not helping her and suggested that she was wasting her time, listening. But Jesus put her right: Doing things for God and for others is important, but listening is even more important.

We mustn't get so busy trying to please God that we don't allow time to hear his voice. Jesus calls us to be 'hearers and doers'. It isn't likely that we will hear an actual voice now because we can all read and God's messages are all contained in the Bible. But we are meant to listen to God's special message for us as we read his word. God waits for us to say: "Speak Lord, your servant is listening".