

# Listen!

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Somebody's knocking at your door. Somebody's knocking at your door. Oh, sinner, why don't you answer? Somebody's knocking at your door.

Let me pray here. Father God, as we turn to your word now, we pray that we would hear today. We would listen today. We would grow more and more in the knowledge of who you are and what you are saying to us personally, but what you're also saying to us at New City.

Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening. In Jesus' name, amen. I'm not going to read all of this, but the word is found here in 1 Samuel chapter 3. It's a familiar passage to us all. I've even shared this word in a few other places.

So let me read for you.

Here I am. And he ran to Eli and he said, here I am, for you called me. But he said, I didn't call you. Lie down again. So he went and lay down.

[ 2 : 01 ]     And Samuel rose and he said, here I am, for you called me. But he said, I didn't call you, my son. Lie down again.

Then Samuel did not. But now Samuel did not know the Lord and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

And the Lord called Samuel again. And the Lord called Samuel again. And he rose and he went to Eli and he said, here I am, for you called me.

Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore, Eli said to Samuel, go lie down. And if he calls you, you shall say, speak, Lord, for your servant hears. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. My father was an auto body man and he came home one day and he had forgotten his keys to get into the house.

[ 3 : 13 ]     And he was tired. He was hungry. Been a long day banging on cars and doing all that kind of stuff. And we were upstairs, just us kids, having a great little time, playing, singing, shouting, making noise, doing all sorts of stuff here.

And just pretty much paying absolutely no attention to anything else. And he first he rang the doorbell and that didn't work. And then he knocked on the door and that didn't work.

Then he started banging on the door because he was getting mad and that didn't work. And so bit by bit, finally, finally, we had this little break when we weren't, I think, I don't know, there was Stevie Wonder fingertips at the time.

I don't remember at the time, but we were dancing and fooling around and we finally heard something. And I was the foolish one who went and answered the door.

And that resulted in, let's just say, a confrontation that I still remember quite well. And so did the rest of those kids as we dashed around the room trying to hide from a man who was pretty mad, pretty mad.

[ 4 : 28 ]     We didn't hear. We didn't listen. I want to talk to you today about listening. Listen, listen.

There are thousands of verses in the scriptures that call us to listen, to hear. In the Hebrew, that word is shema. There's a little iron on the end there.

And so you have to have this kind of sound in it here. You can try it at home later on here. Shema here. In the Greek, it's a kuo. Hear, listen.

Listen. And by implication, this word means to listen, to hear. It really means to act. Obey. Act on what you're about to hear.

Pay attention to what's going on here. And there are so many, so many examples in the scripture. I can't go through those. But my main point today, my main point today has but one goal.

[ 5 : 26 ] And that is to challenge you and encourage you to become more sensitive to listen for the leading, the guiding, the correcting, the empowering work of the Holy Spirit in your life and in the life of your church.

So I ask you this morning, are you listening? I'm not talking about listening to me. I'm talking about listening to God in your heart. Are you listening today?

Are you ready to act? Obviously, the most famous passage of this, our Jewish friends even call it the Shema. We find in Deuteronomy chapter 6.

You know it well. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God. The Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart.

You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk in the way and when you lie down and when you rise.

[ 6 : 37 ] And you shall bind them as signs on your hand. And they shall be frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Shema. Shema. Listen. Hear. I think Jesus was taught that as a young boy here. Because when he was confronted by the Sadducees after dealing with the Pharisees after dealing with the Sadducees.

And they asked him, trying to test him about what was the greatest commandments that there were. He repeated that same command.

You shall love the Lord your God. And he added this. And the second is like unto it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depends all the law and the prophets.

It's all about love. Love of God. Love of other people. Of other people. Are you listening? Do you hear?

[ 7 : 44 ] Good. But you're going to have to do more than just listen. Because the book of James tells us. Jesus' half-brother says in his chapter there. This is from the New Living Translation.

But don't just listen to the word of God. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it's like glancing at your face in the mirror.

You see yourself. Walk away. And forgot what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free.

And if you do what it says. And don't forget what you've heard. Then God will bless you for doing it. Isn't that great? People of God.

There is in our text today. There's a blessing if you listen and do what God says here. And this brings us to our text today in Samuel chapter 3.

[ 8 : 49 ] The story that many of you are familiar with. It is a call to a young boy named Samuel. And you are very, I'm sure, familiar with this story.

And it said, now Samuel was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days. There were no frequent visions.

No frequent visions. This is not the first time in that book that it mentions that Samuel was ministering to the Lord. Yes, children, boys, girls can minister to the Lord.

Do you believe that? I hope you do. Did you hear the call for children's ministry? This is our future. This is extremely important.

Our children. That they're going to hear this word. Grow in this word. And minister as God calls them in different ways. Maybe not quite like Samuel here.

[ 9 : 52 ] But in different sorts of ways. Eli there was the priest. And both of these two dressed in their ephods there. With the gold and with the purple and the blue and the scarlet.

And the stones of remembrance that they're supposed to be wearing during this time. The big priest. The old priest. And the little priest. Here. We don't know exactly how old he was.

But he was a boy. The little priest standing there. Now I'm aware that this is a historic passage. This is a specific prophetic calling to the boy Samuel.

And there are many things that happened in the old covenant that we would not expect for us to experience here today. They'll go home tonight and wait up in your room waiting for God to call you by your name here.

I'm not saying God can't do that. But I never say what God can't do here. But that's not generally what we would expect here.

[ 10 : 56 ] Some audible voice in the night. We're not ancient Israel worshiping in a tabernacle. Because there wasn't even a temple at this particular time. We're not there with the kings of Israel because they didn't even have kings at this time.

They only had judges at this particular time. And of course, we don't have the Ark of the Covenant anywhere around in this church here.

So yes, I understand that there is a difference of that time and now. But I still say this is the word of God. And if it's the word of God, we can still learn many, many things from this passage.

One commentator said that we may not experience these things exactly in the same way. But we can learn something about God. Something about the way of his kindness to it.

And part of that kindness is the fact that he gives us his word. His voice. He speaks to us in his word. But the question here this morning is, are you listening?

[ 11 : 57 ] Are you listening? Now, we're not waiting for some voice in the sky to come out here. We have the word of God right here in front of us. We can read it.

But it still has to speak to our hearts. Even as we read here. We know that this is true because our confession. And I'm not going to read all of this to you. You don't have to.

But I would refer you to our Westminster Confession that talks about scripture. And the key line you need to see there is at the end. Scripture is absolutely essential here.

It helps us to fight against those things that corrupt the flesh and the evil purposes of Satan and the world. So that we might indeed secure and establish and be comforted.

This is what that word does for us. The Bible in Hebrews, the writer says there that long ago and many times and many ways, God spoke to us to the fathers by the prophets.

[ 12 : 55 ] But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son. We hear the voice of Jesus now in scripture. And again, I ask you and I'll ask you again and again over and over.

Are you really, really listening? Are you listening? So let's quickly do some background with regard to this text. And I want to do this and ask you to listen for the spirit of God who may be speaking to New City today.

As we go through this, I want to pause at a life of each one of the people that are involved in this text. And of course, the first one of these is a woman named Hannah. A woman who was the mother of Samuel.

And it was through her faith and her prayer that Samuel ended up in the service of the Lord to begin with. Oh, she was a praying mother.

Oh, for praying mothers. A woman of great faith who gives up her child to the service of the Lord. She overcame ridicule and derision from her own community.

[ 13 : 58 ] Even from the priest Eli who thought she was drunk instead of a woman of prayer. Hannah gave her son away and God blessed her. Later on, he gave her even more children.

Think of that. Wanted this child so greatly. Couldn't have children. Finally received this child. And then she gave them to the Lord. And the Lord blessed her even more in this setting here.

Our children don't belong to us. She knew something that we are still learning. They don't belong to us. So don't put your eggs at all in the basket. That one basket. Your life wrapped around your kids.

Ask Eli. We're going to get to him in a minute too. Here. Ask him. We're just stewards of their care. Because our children belong to the Lord.

They belong to him. Most and foremost. We just finished teaching a Sunday school class. Now actually it was a catechism class there with some other elders.

[ 15 : 00 ] And we had a good time with these kids. These kids are funny. They have all sorts of exciting things to say. Sometimes they are testing us a little bit. In the process here.

And today. Today. We get to test them. Yes. We get to ask them. Did they learn anything here? And in that time of learning.

But it's a wonderful time for old men like me. And young kids. Maybe there's somebody in that class. Who's going to be the next preacher. Of New City. Years from now.

When we. I'm pretty sure. At least I'm speaking for myself. We'll all be gone. Here. Or some missionary somewhere. Or some doctor.

Serving God. In some sort of setting. Or a lawyer. Who is fighting for justice. On behalf of those. For whom justice is kind of short. Maybe one of those kids.

[ 15 : 54 ] Will be that kind of a person. It was a lot of fun here today. Kids can learn. They can hear the call of God. Look at Samuel. We don't know exactly his age. But he was.

It says. Ministering to the Lord. In the presence of Eli. So what expectations do you have. For those of you who have children. For today. And for those of you who don't.

We take a vow here at New City. Your kids are our kids. And our kids are your kids. So you can have expectations. Of somebody else's kids too.

You can pour into their lives too. So what are you expecting of them. As you. As you. As you. As you. Interact with them. And relate to them. And deal with them in this setting.

What is the Lord teaching you. As he is teaching them. About the Shema. To hear. Are they listening? Are you listening? And then there was Eli.

[ 16 : 52 ] Eli was a priest in the tent of the Lord. And he was. He was in charge of things. As you might expect. And he had been for a long time. Eli was quite old. Even older than me. At this particular time.

Eli had some serious problems though. He was old. And he. He didn't see very well. And still worse. He had two sons. Hophni. And Phinehas. And they were also priests.

But they were very bad men. The scripture says. That they treated the offering of the Lord. With contempt. Do you know what it means. To treat.

An offering of the Lord. With contempt. Do you know what the implications. Of that might be. Wow. They abused their power. You want to know about spiritual abuse.

Here. Take a look at these two guys. Here. In this setting. If you really want to see. What it's really like. Here. They exploited. Some of the women. In Shiloh. Where all this was taking place.

[ 17 : 49 ] And they didn't care. Who knew about it. That's how brazen. They were. They didn't care. That's. That. That. That the people knew about it.

Here. And word got back to Eli. Their father. When Eli confronted them. When he rebuked them. And. They paid no attention. To his words. Eli told them. That.

It's one thing. To sin against another man. But it's a terrible thing. To sin against the living God. It's one thing to sin against another man.

But it's a terrible thing to sin against the living God. But the word says. There in the first chapter. But they would not listen. To the voice of their father.

For it was the will of the Lord. To put them to death. There are consequences. When you do not listen. And that's why Samuel. Becomes the main focus. Of the rest of this text.

[ 18 : 48 ] The boy Samuel. Was ministering to the Lord. In the tabernacle. At a very difficult time. God was about. To change. All of this. But the word says.

And the word of the Lord. Was rare. In those days. Was rare. In those days. There was no ESV. No NIV. No living.

In translation. Lying around. For people to read. They needed to hear. From God. But their priests. Were all corrupt. Or inept.

And it also says. There was. No frequent. Vision. There was no. Frequent vision. I want to talk. Just briefly.

About the word. Vision. Here. In this passage. Vision is a very special word. Here. It means. It means. A prophetic. Oracle. A divine. Guiding. Message.

[ 19 : 43 ] A direction. From the Lord. It is revelation. In this particular passage. It tells the people. What. What should they do? But apparently. The Lord. Wasn't speaking.

Very much. To these corrupt priests. And when God. Doesn't speak. We know what people will do. The end of the book of Judges.

Puts it this way. In those days. There was no king in Israel. Everyone did. What is right. In his own eyes. When people don't hear from God. They just do their thing.

It reminds me of a song. It's your thing. Do what you want to do. Yeah. Well. When you live that way. When you live that way.

Not listening to God's word. Here. You end up in real trouble. In fact. Without vision. The scriptures say. That the people.

[ 20 : 39 ] Will perish. Without vision. The scripture says. That the people. Will starve. The prophet Amos. Had to deal with people.

And he says. You know. I'm not. I'm not. He says. I'm not going to. It's not going to be cause. Of lack of food.

It's going to be cause. It's going to be cause. Of a famine of the word. A famine of the word. It's not going to be cause. Of lack of drink.

But a famine of the word. Is going to happen to you. Why? What were they doing? They were oppressing people. Read the book of Amos. They were doing wrong.

Against the widows. And the poor. And he spoke to them there. Without vision. The scripture says. That people will starve. Without vision. The scripture says.

[ 21 : 35 ] That the people. Will God. Will neglect. And oppress the poor. Where were the people. Who said. Speak Lord. For your servant.

Is listening. Where were they? Where are they. Here today. Where are you? God had had enough. Back in this account.

And that's why the story. Of the boy Samuel. Is important. The Lord was about. To do something new. And terrifying. He says to Samuel.

Behold. I'm about to do something. A thing in Israel. At which two ears. Of everyone. Who hear. It. Will tingle.

Make your ears ring. When you hear this. God's going to do something. Is it possible? Is it possible? That God is still speaking. To churches today.

[ 22 : 31 ] Here. Is it going to do something. In 2023. That's going to cause. Ears of everyone. To tingle. Does he still. Set. A vision.

For our churches. Now. Does New City. Have a vision. I don't know. How many of you. Actually. Pick up. And look. At the front cover. Of your bulletin.

Here. But every Sunday. Our vision. Is there. It says. Our vision. Is to be a cross-cultural. Worshiping community. Centered in the gospel.

Of Jesus Christ. That produces. Disciple. The believers. Who become. God's instrument. Of grace. Justice. And mercy. Now.

This particular vision. To be clear. Is not revelation. It's not scripture here. But it is based on the word of God. People have prayed. And designed this. For that reason. But what happens.

[ 23 : 26 ] If your community changes. Oops. There goes the neighborhood. What do you do. If African-American population. In Chattanooga. Continues. To decline.

What happens. Is the spirit of God. Calling. Us. To reach out again. To cross. New barriers. New lines. New cultures. Perhaps. Maybe even planting.

A Spanish-speaking. Iglesia. Is that. Is that. Is that possible. Locking arms. With our young black men. In this community. In helping them. To navigate. This volatile world.

Of guns. And gangs. Pointing them to Jesus. Creating places. Of learning. Like we just saw here. In the Glenwood school. And at the same time.

Not neglecting. Public schools. Right in our neighborhoods. In walking distance. Right here. Is that possible. That God. Has set. That vision.

[ 24 : 22 ] For us. In this particular place. In this particular place. I say yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Are you listening? Are you listening? New city. Are you ready to say it with me?

Shama. Shama. Yes. Hear. Hear this. Are your ears tingling? Are you excited? Are you just. A little bit afraid.

In this Black History Month. Where opportunities. Are all. Possibilities. Things that we could learn. Things that we could grow with. Things that we could know. This should excite us.

Not scare us. These. These things should. Should pull us out. Toward others. Not draw us in. To protect. What we got.

In some sort of way. You know how this story ends. Samuel finally hears the voice of the Lord. With understanding. And after he's instructed by Eli.

- [ 25 : 20 ] Prior to this. Samuel. As it said. He didn't quite know. The Lord fully. He didn't. He didn't recognize that voice. Hadn't been revealed to him. And when he learned. What the message was.
- He was afraid. Yeah. He was afraid. Imagine. Having to tell Eli. That his house was doomed. His adult children. Were going to be punished. And that war was coming.
- Hmm. Sound familiar? Hmm. War against the Philistines. And if you keep reading this passage. You'll see that initially. They lose.
- They lose. And God speaks. Sometimes. There are some difficult things. That he has to say.
- And Samuel. Samuel doesn't hold back. He must say what God tells him to say. And even though it is a message of judgment for Eli and his family. He has to do it.
- [ 26 : 24 ] Even Eli had to acknowledge. That this was a message from the Lord. Here's what Eli says. Let him do what seems good to him.
- Eli was. Eli was old and going down. But he still had enough grace. God gave him enough grace. To even recognize. To be able to say that.
- Let him do what seems good. To him. Samuel listened. And he acted. He acted. And although just a boy. He understood the tension.
- Of speaking the word of the Lord. It can bring a blessing. But it can also bring a curse. In the case of Eli. One commentator said about Samuel.
- He will speak judgment. Because truth is at stake. He cringes. To speak it. Because compassion moves him.
- [ 27 : 21 ] Sometimes you got to bring a word. That is painful. But you got to bring it anyway. You got to bring it anyway. That is what all preachers have to do. With the word of God. Here.
- That is what my task is today. Sometimes. As this commentator says. The preacher. He will both. Inflict the comfortable. And comfort.
- The afflicted. He will both. Inflict the comfortable. And comfort. The afflicted. Speak Lord. For your servant hears. Are you listening after the voice of the Lord today?
- Are you paying attention to his word? Is he calling you to action? Are you listening? Now how do you listen? How do you listen? You listen.
- In faith. You believe God. At his word. The scripture says. You must not only believe. God exists. But he is the rewarder.
- [ 28 : 20 ] Of them. Who seek him. Who go after him. Here. You listen in prayer. Prayer is not a one way street.
- We ask. And intercede. But then we need to listen. To what the Lord says. To our hearts. By his spirit. And through his word. It can't be just.
- Gimme. Gimme. Gimme. Gimme. Gimme. Gimme. Gimme. Gimme. Gimme. Gimme. Gimme. And never. Pause for a minute. Shut out everything else. And listen.
- And see what God says. We listen in worship. In praise. That's why we need to continue. To assemble ourselves together. Are you listening. For the voice of God. As you sing these songs.
- As you hear the preacher. As you take a moment. In silence. Do you hear anything. As he speaks. To those things. Which personally. Deeply concern you.
- [ 29 : 17 ] Should I marry this man? Should I not? Should I go this place? Should I not? Should I take this job? Should I not? Et cetera. Et cetera. But then. Corporately. What should we do? As a church. In this place. In this time.

In New City. Right now. What's our vision? Where are we going? Personal. Corporate. That's who we are.

We listen in work. And we stand up and say. Speak Lord. Your servant is listening. We are. We better be ready.

To do whatever he asks us to do. For these are the good works. That he has prepared for us to do. For his glory. And for our good.

They're out there for us to do. Let's go do them. Let's go do them. Now I'm not a prophet. Like Samuel. I can't tell you what's going to happen in 23. I have my thoughts about this.

[ 30 : 12 ] But I do know this. Today. The word of God is available. It's not so rare. But it's still precious.

It's still precious. Are you listening? Are you learning the voice of Jesus? Do you hear him calling you at New City? At this church? At this place? At this particular historic time?

Jesus is still speaking to his church. We know this. Because we have an example. Even in the scriptures. In Revelation. Several times he says.

To those churches. Those historic churches. I know your works. He says seven times. To those New Testament churches. And repeats.

He who has an ear. Let him hear. What the spirit says. To the churches. Jesus said that all the time. If you got ears.

[ 31 : 11 ] Can you hear? Last time I preached. It was about eyes. This time it's about ears. Can you hear? In particular.

To the church of Laodicea. He specifically says. I know your works. You're neither cold. Nor hot. Would that you were cold. Or hot. So that.

Because you are lukewarm. And neither cold or hot. I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say. I'm rich. I have prospered.

I need nothing. Not realizing. That you are wretched. Pitiable. Poor. Blind.

And naked. New city. We haven't arrived. We're not there. And a bag of chips. Here. We have a lot.

[ 32 : 05 ] To do. In this time here. This is a great opportunity. To continue. To raise up disciples. Of justice. Grace. Mercy. This is what.

We have been called. To do. In this particular place. Sometimes. Jesus's words. To his people. Can be pretty harsh. We saw this. In the vision. That the boy Samuel.

Received. But even there. There was grace. Was it not? And in this passage. As well. Even as he said this. To the church. In Laodicea. He says.

Those whom I love. I reprove. And discipline. So what? So be zealous. And repent. Isn't that an interesting combination?

Be zealous. And repent. That's not a contradiction. Here. We have to do both of these things. I think.

[ 33 : 03 ] They did. And I think we do too. But then there is this famous. Even after saying all of this. This famous invitation. And it should. I wish we were having communion today.

Because this would fit in so beautifully. Right here. It should prepare us. Anyway. For communion is coming. For the Lord's table. For he concludes. This particular passage.

By saying. Behold. I stand at the door. And knock. If anyone hears my voice. And opens the door.

I will come in. And eat with him. And he with me. What an invitation. To us. Is it not?



Is it not? Aslan is on the move. Now. In this world today. Are you with? Are you with? Are you ready to come to the table?

[ 34 : 01 ] Sit at the feet of Jesus. Eat and learn from him. For he has the words of life. New city. And then move.

Move. To the glory of God. Let's pray. Father God. Thank you. For your word.

Spirit of the living God. Fall fresh on us. Break us. And melt us. And mold us. But Lord. Especially. Fill us. So that we may do.

The very things. You have called us to do. Keep us sensitive. In our personal lives. But in the life of this church. Lord.

Keep us focused. On the vision that you have set. And when things change. Help us to change. And to grow. In the knowledge of who you are.

[ 35 : 01 ] In this place. In Jesus name we pray.