

## January 14, 2017 Sermon Notes

### Sermon Focus

1 Samuel 3 (includes a summary of Samuel's life).

I will also make connections to MLK Jr. but you've got to come to hear that part!

### All readings for this Sunday

[http://lectionarypage.net/YearB\\_RCL/Epiphany/BEpi2\\_RCL.html](http://lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Epiphany/BEpi2_RCL.html)

### Samuel's Early Life

Hannah and Elkanah were Samuel's parents. According to the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 6, Elkanah was a Levite (the priestly set). According to 1 Samuel 1:1-28, Elkanah had two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless. Hannah had her husband's heart, but Peninnah could have kids. Peninnah was the mean one who was always taking Hannah down a notch. Elkanah and Hannah were faithful, but childless parents. This theme shows up where else in the Bible? Remember Abraham and Sarah who have Isaac. Remember Elizabeth and Zechariah who have John the Baptist.

Because they were a faithful couple, they would go on a regular religious pilgrimage. Hannah would beg God in the Shiloh temple for a child. She told God that she would make the child a Nazarite if she was blessed with a pregnancy. She would make the boy a Nazarite to be set apart – no sex, drugs, or rock roll. Samuel would be dedicated to God. John the Baptist and Samson were also set apart in the same way.

Eli, the priest at the time, who ran the temple, saw Hannah and thought she was drunk when she was praying. After a moment, Eli saw that she was not lit, so he blessed her. The blessing worked, and Samuel was born. Hannah did not forget her prayer and she gave young Samuel to the temple (to grow up there). Samuel would grow up to be visited by his family yearly. It is interesting to note that she had a passel of kids after Samuel - 1 Samuel 2:21.

### Samuel's Call

This is the most famous part of Samuel's life – here I am Lord. Somewhere in his early teen or tween years, Samuel hears God three times and gets a 'word of the Lord' that is encouraging. Samuel would become famously devout and loved by the people. That word of the Lord also included a curse on his mentor Eli. Eli had let his sons run amok doing "God's work", and God was fed up with those shenanigans.

### History around Samuel.

Israel's brief history will help you locate Samuel. Way back in Genesis, nomadic chieftains - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - were extremely wealthy ranchers/farmers that defined the early history of the Hebrews. Isaac's son, Jacob, would get renamed Israel and have a bunch of kids. One of the kids, Joseph, gets sold to Egyptian slave traders. In this Egyptian period (late Genesis), Joseph becomes powerful in Egypt, and a famine hits the whole region. Egypt has food which forces Jacob/Israel's family to come and sell off everything of value just to stay alive. Pharaohs (the kings of Egypt) will come and go while Israel's family thrives for 400 years.

Later, one Pharaoh says, "Joseph, Smoseph, I am going to get everything I can out these terrible, fertile Hebrews and make their lives miserable." Then you-know-who shows up, the *let me my people go* guy in Moses. Moses gets them out of Egypt and almost into the promised land, Cana (this journey is the focus of the Book of Exodus). Once the Hebrews get to Cana, there are lots of people already living there and hilarity ensues... if you count genocide and turmoil as hilarious.

Each one of Jacob/Israel's favorite kids become a namesake for the "Twelve Tribe of Israel". The tribes don't play well together, which leads to a need for "Judges" to unite this loose confederacy of tribes (seen in the book of Judges). The Judges - twelve guys and a woman - are anointed by God to pull the tribes together in times of crisis. Once the crisis is over, the tribes have no King but God/Yahweh himself. In theory, the Judge would rejoin the civilian population after the crisis is over.

### Samuel's Kids

Samuel, our guy today, thinks like a Judge --- God is the only King. He reasons that this is the way Israel should be ruled forever. But Samuel's family makes this ideal hard to implement. Samuel is the last judge, because his sons stink. The sons are trying to build a dynasty of corruption and profligate living. 1 Samuel 8:3 says, *but his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.* This behavior is almost exactly what Eli, Samuel's mentor, was cursed for back in 1 Samuel 3. Eli's kids and now Samuel's kids had run roughshod over the people's faith.

### Kings

Because of this poor management, the people say to Samuel, "Give us a king". Under pressure, Samuel anoints Saul as King. This would cause him years of heart burn, until he would do a highly irregular thing by anointing David as the King in secret, while Saul is still King.

### The End

Samuel's last claim to fame is being summoned from his eternal rest, by Saul who was still fighting like crazy to remain King. Saul had the "witch of Endor" call up Samuel in a séance. Once ghostly Samuel showed up, he was still not happy with Saul ☹️.

Happy MLK weekend. Todd