

Green Hill Presbyterian Church
“Sabbath Listening”
Ordinary 9—June 3, 2018
Kids’ Sunday
Thomas G. Speers, III

Lessons: 1 Samuel 3:1-10; Mark 2:23-3:6

It used to be said that children should be seen but not heard. The point was that kids look great—and all of our kids here do—but you don’t really get to contribute to adult conversation or adult decisions. Children should be seen but not heard. Today I want to tell you that in the church, children should be seen AND heard!

If you read stories in the Bible, you will discover that God used to talk directly to people, but then there was a time when God’s word was rarely heard or seen. In that time, a boy named Samuel was serving God under the direction of Eli. In the middle of the night, Samuel was fast asleep and he heard someone calling him: Samuel, Samuel! And he thought it was Eli calling and he went and woke Eli, but Eli said “I didn’t call you.” I bet he was a little grumpy, like we parents might be if you were to wake us up in the middle of the night. So, Samuel went back to bed and again the voice called him: Samuel, Samuel! Again, he woke up Eli and Eli again sent him back to bed and this happened a third time and Eli suddenly thought that it might be God who was calling. So he told Samuel: “If you hear the voice again, say: *Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.* And God did call again and gave little Samuel a special message for all the people including the grown-ups. God chose a little boy to talk to and that little boy was the one who talked for God. In the church children should be seen and heard.

Now there is another story told today about keeping the Sabbath. When God created the world, God rested on the seventh day, and we are called to do the same. We are meant to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. One of the ways that we used to do that was that we would not do much of anything on Sundays except go to church. No sports, no shopping, no going to the movies, no dancing or playing or watching TV or listening to the radio. When Jesus was alive, some people had very strict laws about keeping Sabbath—no work of any kind. So they did not understand when Jesus’ disciples started plucking grain in the field because they were hungry. They also saw Jesus heal a man with a hurt hand and it was a Sabbath day. This made them angry. Don’t do any work on the Sabbath. That was their law. But Jesus said: the Sabbath was made to serve us; we were not made to serve the Sabbath.

Sometimes when people hear Jesus saying that, they think—no more Sabbath. We don’t have to follow those rules any more. I don’t think he was saying that. I think he was saying that sometimes there are more important rules. You can always help someone who is hurting or hungry even if it is the Sabbath day. And remembering the story of Samuel, I think there is something we all can do on Sabbath days. We all can listen. People today might say what they said in Samuel’s time that the word of God is rarely heard or seen. That doesn’t mean God is not calling. It might just mean that we are not listening. Maybe we could decide to take special time every Sunday to listen. Maybe we could say with Samuel: *Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.* If we do that, maybe the word of the Lord won’t be rare any more.

Our children should be seen and heard. Maybe God will have a special word for the rest of us from you.

Let us pray: *Speak Lord, for your servants are listening.* Help us to celebrate the Sabbath by listening for you. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.