

1 Samuel 3:1-10 The boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days. Prophetic vision was not common.

2Now it happened that Eli's eyes had begun to grow dim, so that he could not see. Once when Eli was lying down in his place **3**and God's lamp had not yet gone out, Samuel was lying down in the LORD's temple, where God's ark was. **4**The LORD called Samuel, and Samuel said, "I am here." **5**He ran to Eli, and said, "I am here, since you called me."

Eli said, "I did not call. Lie down again." So he went and lay down.

6Then the LORD called once more, "Samuel!"

So Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "I am here, since you called me."

He answered, "I did not call, my son. Lie down again."

7Now Samuel had not yet experienced the LORD's presence, that is, the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

8The LORD called Samuel for the third time. So he got up and went to Eli and said, "I am here, since you called me."

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the young man. **9**So Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'"

So Samuel went and once again lay down in his place. **10**The LORD came and stood there and called as he had the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Grace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Over the past few weeks the only voices that have woken me up in the middle of the night have been the voices of our kids, and then the issue isn't ever more than, "My blanket is crooked." It's an easy fix.

But during the day over the last few weeks I *have* had people ask me my thoughts on everything going on. "Hey, you're a pastor," the text read from a friend. "Can you give me some answers? I keep trying to figure out God's angle here. What am I missing?" Maybe you've been in similar conversations.

Samuel was missing something, wasn't he? He didn't yet know the Lord, at least not in the way that he was experiencing that night — God speaking to him directly. It had not occurred to Samuel, sleeping in the Lord's temple, feet away from the ark and God's presence, that the voice

he was hearing was the Lord's. Three times it took, for him and really Eli, to realize what was going on.

God doesn't speak directly to us. He speaks primarily through his Word. But as we live our lives, he does use the things in our world to give us opportunities to remember what his Word says. At first we think, there's no way *this* will happen in our lives. God wouldn't allow it. And then it happens. And then something else comes down the pike. Not that, God wouldn't let it — no way! And then it does. And we've had it so good for so long that we think, what's happening? What's God doing? What's God's angle here? What am I missing?

The problem is that our sinfulness has led us to think that God's will is for us to have a *good* measure of health and wealth and success, the good life, free and easy, or at least better than our parents had it. And for many, maybe the majority in our country, that's the way it's been for generations. So God is not against us having a measure of these things, but we must be reminded that they are not a part of his expressed and written will for our lives. And when things happen to thwart that will we've come to think God has for us, we're left with that question, "What am I missing?"

Make no mistake, this is just another attempt by the devil to lure us away from our faith, to confirm our doubts, to leave it all behind only to face the fires of hell forever. The blessing of times like these is that we see how the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh have been working behind the scenes to shift our focus, at least in our own minds, trying to make God's will more in line with our own.

And like Josiah, who you may recall was the boy king who rediscovered the gospel after it had been lost for many years, we must come to rediscover God's message, what God's expressed and written will is. And when we do, we realize God's will is not for earthly wealth and power, as much as God has used those things in our part of the world as blessings for our good and the advancement of the gospel. And his will isn't for health and the most advanced scientists so that pandemics are a thing of the past, as much as we have lived without them for so long. And his will is not that we are so removed from evil and sinful men that we don't have to think about the unthinkable — a country divided and its future uncertain, as much as our unity has been a constant in the world for so long.

God's will is this: First that we see the reality of the sinful world around us, that we confess the reality of our own sinfulness and the fires of hell we deserve, that we take seriously the reality that the devil is working as hard as he can to make the realities of sin, death, and hell our eternal fate, and that *that* reality — that we are lost on our own — would drive us to terrifying madness over our sins... and to look to God for a solution.

Second, his will is that we trust in the solution he has fashioned for us and be saved. That we would believe in his one and only Son sent into this world to save us from our sins, from death, hell, and the devil.

Third, his will is that we would serve him in all we do, no longer driven mad by our sins and the punishment we deserve, but out of thanks for all that Jesus has done for us to free us from God's punishment — his perfect life lived in our place, his death he suffered to pay for our sins, his resurrection to life so that on the last day he will raise us too.

That we repent of our sins, that we believe in his Son, that we serve him with unceasing praise and thanks. That's it. That's God's will. And he will sacrifice a strong economy, 250 years of national history, a national identity, worldly freedom and democracy, the health of the world all for the furthering of his will. Because God has no angle here, at least not an earthly one. Though many things seem to be changing in our world, his directives, his message, his will has not changed. **God our Savior wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

Period. The same answer was in our psalm this morning, 67: **May your ways be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.**

That's it. That's God's will. That's what so often we are missing as some of these history altering events seem to be unfolding around us. But I think we ask that question, what am I missing, because it seems that we are losing something. What am I missing? Doesn't God see what's happening, to our health, to our country, to our freedom, to our democracy? It could all be lost! But when we understand God's will, we realize, we're not losing anything, that no matter what, it's ok. And it's going to *be* ok. If this life was all there was, then yes, it's time to worry, time to panic. But it's not. Thanks to Jesus and his work for our salvation, one day, we'll look back on this life and it will seem like a flash, a distant memory before all things were made how they were always supposed to be.

So, a little while and eternity.

A little while we suffer

A little while we worry — we're sinful

A little while we deal with the effects of sin

A little while we fight like mad against death and the devil

A little while and eternity

For eternity we will suffer no more

For eternity we will be filled with joy and peace

For eternity we will be free of sin

For eternity means no death, no hell, no devil, no foe.

So for a little while we trust. We trust in our God and his will, his plan for us and our salvation, our future, not in this sinful world, but in heaven with him, more perfect than we could ever imagine. In our family devotions we are reading a devotional book made up of parts of sermons from Martin Luther. A recent one was on not putting our trust in earthly wealth, or basing our fate on how earthly events turn out, but trusting in God and not worrying. And the point he made was that people of this world put their trust in their money and they don't worry. If they have money in the bank, they have no care in the world. If *they* can be at ease, if *they* can be at peace, how much more should we? We have much more than money, much more than political power, much more than a vaccine. We have the almighty God who has promised to work all things together for our good. All things means all things. So trust him! He will use this virus, politics, the economy, whatever else this year brings, for our ultimate, eternal good. That's his will. That's his way. It kind of makes you sit back and say, "Wow." How blessed are we?

And then, as Jesus said to Nathanael, "You will see much greater things than these!" Forgiveness of sins, perfection before God today, eternal life waiting for us, new heavens and new earth, the old passing away...and we realize, we're just getting started!

Times like these lead us to ask the question, what are we missing. Samuel was missing something until he realized that it was the Lord speaking to him. The Lord has already spoken to us. Everything we need to know, everything we need to see us through, it's all right here in his Word. May

these times lead us to seek the answer, back to our God, back to his word
and will: to repent of our sins, believe in his Son, serve him with thanks
and praise because...we're not missing anything, not today, not tomorrow,
not ever. Amen!