

It's astonishing just how much knowledge we have that is just plain not true. You would think, as rational, intelligent beings with loads of sensory input and years of experience, we would be able to discern truth from fiction. And yet, how often are we just flat-out wrong about something? I'll give you a hint, it's more than we usually admit. We constantly make assumptions based on the meager data we have, we ignore things that we consider irrelevant often times without even knowing we're doing it, and to top it all off, by nature we have a self-centered view of how the world works. This leads to a lot of error on our part. This leads to us very often saying or doing the wrong thing that we thought was right.

Take a look at the boy Samuel in our reading today. He thought he knew what was true, and that led to him approaching his situation in the wrong way: <read text: 1 Samuel 3:1-10>.

A voice calls to the boy in the middle of the night. Samuel "knew" the truth. The truth was that there was only one other person with him where he was. And so by necessary logic, only one person could have called to him. So he gets up and goes to Eli and asks him what he wanted. Eli struggles out of sleep. "What? No. I didn't call you. Go back to bed." Again the voice calls. Again Samuel knows this has to be Eli, but again it is not. Eli, however, knew things that Samuel did not. And now he enlightens the boy on what is happening. Eli instructs Samuel on what to do the next time the voice calls for him. And lo and behold, it works. It was the Lord calling for Samuel.

The Lord had been calling for Samuel each time. But Samuel did not understand it, he could not hear it as the Lord simply because he didn't know that was possible. He hadn't been properly instructed about his God yet, apparently. What Samuel thought he knew got in the way of what the truth was. And he was unable to change his own perspective. It took someone who knew better to teach him about God. Eli had to change Samuel's perspective, his understanding. Only with that outside push was he able to respond how he did, "Speak, your servant is listening."

I don't know if we appreciate what a miracle it truly is for anyone to be able to speak those words. What happened with Samuel here is like a metaphor of how we all came to utter that same phrase to our God. It works in roughly the same way. God lives in our world. He works in the world around us constantly. He is active in our lives and even speaking to us regularly through his word. He is here and he is in control. You and I know that, we are able to recognize that.

And yet we didn't always. For each of us there was a time, for some a short time, for some much longer, when we did not know this. Oh, but it's not like we lacked information at the time. Infant or adult we're always confident we have a handle on how the world works and what the rules are. As we grow we learn the natural rules that govern life. We know that in order to have, you need to do. That you are in charge of yourself and responsible for whatever happens to you. We know how we have to work to provide for ourselves and our families, we know what things we need to worry about in order to see to it that we always have enough. We know what we need to be content. We know about bad luck and accidents, how things can change our lives at random but we can protect ourselves against them. We know that we may have to die someday, but we can put that off as long as possible with healthy living and good doctors, since we know that death is a bad thing.

On and on I could go. All the things we know that this world teaches us, all the things we're taught are true, and every single one of them untrue. But because we think we know what's true, it gets in the way of the truth. Our confidence in our own knowledge defeats us. Only God can change that perspective and set us straight. Because, like Samuel, we think we already have a handle on how reality works, we cannot change this perspective ourselves.

And so God comes to us each, through his word and changes us. The Holy Spirit enlightens us, he opens our eyes to see the truth we couldn't see before. Like scales falling from our eyes we can see the world as it really is. The old truths we thought we knew shatter and we're left with a new and better understanding of our world. It is at this point that we are well and truly able to hear God when he speaks. And through his word he teaches us the truth. Most importantly the truth of how he has rescued us. That our selfish ambition and our ignorance was killing us, driving us on a path straight to eternal punishment. But those sins were atoned for when God himself died for you. And now through faith that gift is granted to you.

This understanding ripples out to affect every area of our lives. If there is an eternity of joy after this, and that is a guarantee, then every other outcome in this life is essentially inconsequential. I can be content in any circumstance because I have a risen Savior, and that cannot be taken away from me. I do not need things or places or even people to be at peace if I have an all-powerful God who loves me and cares for me every step of every day. Recognizing that God is in control allows me to let go of my worries and my fears. If I trust him, and he rules this world, than nothing can truly "go wrong" and there is nothing left that can truly hurt me.

Knowing that saving souls is the ultimate and most important goal allows me to make sense of the fact that a loving God can allow suffering and trouble in this world. I can see him working with this new understanding of truth. Always working not to make our lives here perfect and comfortable, but to keep us close to him through whatever means necessary. The world is not a random place, but is guided and directed by God. And when I listen to my God I know that his promises are trustworthy and true.

Of course, it's not all as perfect as that is it? This peace and contentment should be ours already, the worry and fear should be gone. But I know my life isn't perfectly like that, and I feel pretty confident in suggesting that yours is not either. Why is that the case? If all the wonderful things that God tells us are true, then none of those things should be issues, right? Well, as always, the problem is with us.

What our God says is true, and does bring about the changes he promises in our lives, but none of that is helpful if we do not actually listen when he speaks to us. Our ears may be opened and our hearts changed that we can listen and understand him, but that doesn't mean we always do. Oh, we may hear the words he speaks, but that doesn't mean we're truly paying attention or even comprehending what he's saying. And the struggle happens for the same reason, because the old self within us thinks it knows too much.

God speaks to us. He tells us his truth in his word, but because it conflicts with what we think we know, we start in with our own platform. God, are you sure that's the way it's supposed to be? God, shouldn't you be more concerned about this? God, I don't think you're doing that right. Sounds absurd when I put it like that, but that doesn't stop us from doing exactly that in a thousand ways when our Lord speaks.

Ever talk to that kind of person? You're trying to explain to someone why things aren't the way they think they are, but they're not really listening, they have their mind made up already, and they're just waiting for their chance to speak again to tell you why you're wrong? That is exactly what we do to God. The difference here is *he is your God*. You don't get to argue with God. You don't get to tell him he's doing it wrong. You don't get to question whether he's keeping his word or not.

I want you to imagine something, and I want you to keep this image in your mind when those questions or objections pop in your head. I want you to imagine you're standing face to face with God. And I don't mean the easy-to-handle, hidden glory, plain human version like Jesus walked the earth as. I mean *God*. In all his splendor and glory and power. And God looks at you and says to you in no uncertain terms, "I am God. Listen. I am in control of this world. I am watching over my church. I am watching over your life. I will guide this world and my church and your very life in the best way so that you can be brought to eternal life with me and so that my church will continue to do its work in this world that as many as possible may be brought to that same eternal life."

"Yeah, but God, what about the Christians being murdered in the Middle East?"

"Yeah, but God, what about how the politicians are ruining our country?"

"Yeah, but God, what about the problem I have with something in my church?"

"Yeah, but God, what about that person who just irritates me to no end?"

Imagine God staring down at you in the face of such stupid questions. Do you need God to repeat himself? Because God already answered all of those with what he said. Were you listening? The soul that trusts God will silence the objections and listen when your God is speaking. We may tend to think we already know better before he says anything. But before God, we don't. We may think we need to step in, "help him out" and meddle with what he has already decreed to make it better, but we don't. If you want a good example of where that gets you, go look up Abraham's first born son; Ishmael when you get home (Gen 16).

And ultimately, yes we are sinning against our God, but the ones we're really hurting doing this is ourselves. We rob ourselves of peace when we doubt, when we won't listen to our God. So silence that old self with the questions and the objections. Be silent and listen when God speaks. And the amazing thing is that what God has to say has the power to build up your trust in him further and deeper. The more we just listen to him without interrupting, the more we can, and the greater our comfort and peace will be.

Because our God has truly amazing things to say to us. And what he has to say is meant for your peace and comfort. He is in control of this world and his church and your life. That is not a call to inaction from us, but it is a reason not to worry or fear. He knows so much better than us. Trust him as he deserves. He is the one who engineered and carried out your eternal salvation from before you were born. He is the one who died that you might live. Everything he declares is trustworthy, the one who promises is faithful. When your God speaks to you, just listen. Amen.