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“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:9).

1 Sam 3:1-10, 19-20; Mark 1:29-39

Both readings for today are feast for the senses. The call of the boy Samuel in the night is a reminder of how important listening is in our spiritual growth. The story of Jesus as he bursts on the scene at the start of his ministry is a visual window into the power of grace meeting people’s needs. They cannot get enough of Jesus, pursuing him into the evening of a day of healing and exorcisms, then searching for him in the early light of the next day. Peter announces, “Everyone is looking for you!” Our call deepens when we long to hear and see God in our lives.

Learning to listen is not a given. We live in a noisy world, and each day we are bombarded with sensations and visual distractions from our electronic devices, clock radios waking us up to music or news, smart phones beeping out messages, televisions and computers flashing images and words, even our cars talking to us on the drive to work. The emphasis is on consuming and sending information. We post, publish, tweet, Instagram and email as we enter the great web controlled by hidden persuaders, predators and data infobots tracking and recording our paths in order to read our souls and secure our trust.

As he proclaimed the Kingdom, Jesus faced the clamor of the crowds, the cries of unclean spirits routed from their victims, the ridicule and outrage of his critics. Exhausted after a day of preaching and healing, he withdrew into the wilderness to renew his spirit at the well of his Abba’s love. Only by listening would he know what to say that day as the mission moved forward to other towns. Disciples are those

who listen intently for the prompting of the Spirit. They pray to locate Jesus in the jumble of competing agendas and anxieties. Seek first the Kingdom of God, and everything else will be provided. Miss this basic first step, and everything else will be lost in the confusion and noise.

The boy Samuel began his prophetic and priestly service when he learned to listen and respond to the voice of God calling him in the night. We are called to listen for that same voice calling us by name. Our real lives begin the moment we can say with faith and courage, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

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