

Yesterday was the annual meeting for the Iowa Conference, and after all of that fun, we had the installation of our conference Minister, Reverend Roberto Ocho. And during his installation, we had two very good speakers. One of which was the conference minister for the Kansas Oklahoma conference, the Reverend Dr Lorraine Sentenceros. And she started talking about something that we've been talking about a lot this week. How do you hear God? More importantly, she started talking about the people that were listening to that speech. And that we're listening every Sunday morning that come aren't the people who need to hear God? Everyone that comes to church is already looking. They're already in that spot where they're trying to hear what God is saying. They just don't always know that they are hearing God. They don't know that they're hearing the message. Specifically that is meant for them, but they're trying. They're trying to hear it. They're trying to build that Faith. They're trying to understand God's glory, God's message, God's meaning.

And even though we're here, we don't know if we're getting the right message. We don't know If what I'm saying up here is necessarily what you're hearing me say. That's one of the great things. Every Sunday, I love standing in the receiving line. I love talking to everybody after church, because not one of you tells me the same thing that I said, Never. I never hear the same thing from any of you, and that's wonderful. I know, that sounds a little confusing, but it's great because you're hearing God's word the way you need to hear it. You're hearing God's word. You're hearing it; you're hearing what you need to hear.

Well, I say for me, is it necessarily well. I would say for Sue. or Paul, or Debbie, or Jim, because God speaks to each one of us differently. God has a different plan for each one of us. So, why would God tell us one blanket thing? And I expect all of us to do the same thing, because we're not. We're not the same people. So, how do you hear God on Friday? I

n our Bible study, I said before I talk to God, I pray. I said it specifically to somebody that afternoon, and they said I was crazy. Not in their words. But the smirk and look of confusion, cuz, why would you pray before you pray, Right? I pray before I pray because I need to center. I need to block out all of the extra confusion. All of the noises that are going on outside. Because even though I might be here, on really bad days, I sit right over there and I pray. And then I start talking to God. You would think that being here in the middle of the afternoon, there'd be no outside confusion. There'd be no outside stressors, but there is. There always is. There's always something going on in the back of my mind that distracts me. I'm talking with God when it's just me and God. That was planned. It's okay.

Um, the same is the case of Samuel in today he's reading. Now Samuel doesn't know that he can speak to God. He doesn't know that he's a prophet. He's just some kid. And even though he's lying next to the Ark of the Covenant, the most holy thing in

Jewish tradition at this point in time, because they don't have a temple. So, the Ark goes everywhere they go. So they all sleep around it so, as it doesn't get stolen in the middle of the night. So he is literally in the most holy place in their faith, and he has distractions going on. He doesn't recognize the fact that God is talking to him. He's worried more about Eli, who was old, and was blind. He was feeble. He's concerned about his well-being more than he is concerned about God talking to him. He's more concerned about somebody else and recognizing the fact that God has a plan for him. God is trying to tell him what to do.

We all get like that. We all have those moments in our lives where everything is so busy around us that we don't hear God's message. We don't hear what God is trying to tell us, and we willingly look for it. Our faith is at a point that we look for God's assurance. We look for God's protection, and we still can't hear it. Imagine those people that aren't looking for it. That aren't recognizing that it's a great part of their life. That is back in the back right now. I'm hoping that the Sunday kid, Sunday school kids can hear what I'm saying because I asked the confirmation class today to look up Proverbs 16, 9.

Proverbs 16, 9, says that your head We'll find a way, But God directs your feet. I asked them to look that up because that describes my faith, because for so long, in my life, my mind said, this is what I'm supposed to do. This is who I'm supposed to be. This is where I'm supposed to go. Then God kept making my feet come this way because I couldn't hear him. I could not hear what they were trying to tell me because I knew better. I knew I didn't need to listen to God. I knew that I didn't need to listen to anybody, and I didn't for a very long time. And that's why I pray before I pray because I want to hear what God says. And like, it's so distracting that it's hard. How do we help the people that don't want to hear God's word? How do we help the people that know they want to hear it, but are too proud to come back to church?

On a weekly basis. I talked to somebody that used to be a member of this church. And they tell me that they want to come back, but they don't. And they won't. I had somebody two weeks ago tell me that they would not come back to this church because of Ira. Like Ira has been gone for 30 years. More than 30 years, 40 years. At one point, I had somebody tell me they wouldn't come because of Warren. Warren's been gone a long time. I've had somebody tell me they wouldn't come because of Mary Beth. Mary Beth has now been gone a long time. I had somebody tell me they wouldn't come because of me. And I said, thank you for being honest. I hope you find peace wherever you do go. Because that's what's important. It isn't important that we make people sit in the pews. It isn't important that we bring people here because we want them to be here. They need to hear God's word wherever they can, wherever best suits them. And it's wonderful that we get to spend this time together. That we get to hear God's word together. And that we recognize that God doesn't speak to each one of us the same way. And he doesn't necessarily have the same plan for each one of us. Whether we get to share that together, Let us pray.