

"Get to Know God" 1 Samuel 3:1-9 / Matthew 16:13-20 (08/25/2024)

When I decided to do my ministry internship course in Brodhead, Wisconsin, I started to search for Wisconsin's culture, history, and social issues because I did not have a chance to connect with Wisconsin in my life. After I learned about Wisconsin, I realized that Wisconsin is the state of football and cheese. Unfortunately, football and cheese are unfamiliar to Korean culture, so I should study football and cheese. I started to learn about the play rules of football, such as ways to get the score, position, and roles of the players. Finally, I realized that Super Bowl commercials are much more interesting than football games.

To learn about cheese, I visited a cheese master's store in Brodhead. When I went into the store, I saw the menu board on top, and I was surprised because I did not know there were so many kinds of cheese in the world. I did not know the difference between the cheeses, so I randomly picked three cheeses and asked the staff about the difference. I asked, "I am learning about cheese. What is the difference between Brick, Havarti, and Munster?" Then the staff answered, "You can try them!" I thought, 'Oh, she is such a good staff. Yes, experience is much better than explanation.' She gave me three pieces of cheese. I tasted Brick, and it was so nice, then I tasted Havarti, it was also so good, then I tasted Munster, it was also so

wonderful. However, after tasting three kinds of cheese, I really did not know the differences between the cheeses. So, I picked Havarti and Munster because the name Brick was not cool, then I came back home. After returning home, I googled the names of cheeses, and then I was really embarrassed because Havarti was Denmark Cheese, Munster was French Cheese, and Brick was Wisconsin Cheese. I bought Denmark and French cheese to learn about Wisconsin cheese! Through googling, I could know where those cheeses came from and the difference between the three kinds of cheese. If I knew about the cheese and asked what Wisconsin cheese was to the staff of the cheese store, I would surely choose Brick cheese.

Getting to know something helps us experience it more deeply and well. I believe that our relationship with God can also be deeper when we know about God. Through today's Scripture, we can see how the relationship with God could be different when we know about God.

Before we read today's Scripture 1 Samuel, we should know the background context of the Scripture. After Moses, God called Joshua as the next leader of the Israelites. After Joshua, God called Judges to lead the people of Israel. During the time of Judges, Israel repeated corruption and repentance several times. Every time when Israel forgot about God, God called a judge to make Israel return to God.

Samuel was the last judge of Israel. He was the last judge of Israel who anointed the first king of Israel. Through the early part of 1 Samuel, we can see in what context Samuel was called by God. In 1 Samuel 2:13-14, “The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest’s servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, and he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. All that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there.” This Scripture shows how Eli’s sons did to people. Eli’s sons were priests at this time. Even priests, when Samuel was called, did not follow the Law. How could Eli’s sons commit those kinds of sins before God even though they were priests? 1 Samuel 2:12 says, “Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the LORD.” They did not know God. They committed sins before God because they did not know God. The priests in the time of young Samuel did not know God. Then, how could the people of Israel know God? Even though Samuel’s mother, Hannah, prayed and cried before God, even though Samuel lived with the high priest, Samuel might not have any way to know about God. As today’s Scripture said, Samuel heard the voice of God calling him. And he answered. But he did not know it was God. He ran to Eli. He thought that voice was Eli.

When I was not a Christian, I had a lot of Christian friends and teachers. They

always tried to take me to their church and to deliver the Gospel to me. My elementary school teacher taught the Bible every week. I also lived with Christian roommates when I was in China. Now, I carefully assume that those Christians were the call of God to let me return to God. God sent me lots of people to deliver God's message. However, At that time, I thought the Bible teaching from my teacher was religious persecution, and my roommates were tempting me to convert my religion. I did not know it was God's guidance because I did not know God at that time.

In today's Gospel Scripture, there was a person who knew God. It was Peter. In Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" People knew who Jesus was, but people did not know who Jesus was. People thought Jesus was just one of the prophets. But Peter confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter really knew who Jesus was. To understand this Scripture well, we should know where Caesarea Philippi was. In the time of the Roman Empire, Caesarea Philippi was the center of the culture of the Empire. People built a lot of temples for Roman gods at Caesarea Philippi. Caesarea Philippi was the center of idolatry. In this place of gods, Peter confessed Jesus was the Christ and the Son of the living God. Peter knew who Jesus was.

Let's return to today's Scripture, 1 Samuel. Fortunately, Eli knew that God

was calling Samuel. And he told Samuel to say, “Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.” Now Samuel knew who was calling him. Then, when he heard the voice of God again, he answered, “Speak, for your servant hears.” He did not say, “Oh my God! Is it you? Is it real? Are you, my God? How can it happen?” He just said, “Speak, for your servant hears.” When he knew God, he was ready to listen to God, and then God told him the message.

In the Gospel of Matthew, when Peter confessed who Jesus was, Jesus started to talk about his death and resurrection. At the place of idolatry, Peter knew who the only God and Christ was. When Jesus’s disciples knew who Jesus was, Jesus started to tell them the next.

The Gospel, the sound sweeter than honey, was a bitter sound for me when I did not know God. The Gospel came into my right ear and passed out to my left ear when I did not know God. After I knew God through the church families in New Zealand, after I had known who God was, the Good News of Immanuel, the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus, the presence of the Holy Spirit became the sweetest sound in my life.

God is with us here today. God is inviting us to make a relationship. God is asking us to know God. Today, may the Holy Spirit reveal our hearts and minds so

that we know our gracious and loving God. Amen.