

Today we are going to start a little different. I am going to invite you to listen to a song that I enjoy. I am even going to have the words put on the screen so you can see what he is singing.

Play Song *Waiting on the World to Change*

I like the song. It is a good tune. I like the song. But I want to tell you, there is something about it that bothers me. It talks about a generation of people who feel left out, who feel disenfranchised. They are waiting, waiting for the world to change. As if someone else will bring about the change that they are hoping for.

The reality is that there are many people in our world who feel like they are disenfranchised. There are a lot of people in the world who feel like they are standing on the outside looking in. There are a lot of people, who are hoping someone will finally come and do something to bring about the change we want, or we hope for or we desire. Some of us in this room probably are feeling that very way.

**For those of us who have ever felt like we are on the outside looking in, our scripture offers us a hope and a challenge.** It is a passage that reminds us that God sees what is going on in this world and that God wants to do something about it (that's the hope). It also reminds us that God wants to work through us, to bring about that change in the world (that's the challenge).

Today we are talking about Stepping into the Future. It is the concluding sermon of our series on Finding a Place to Belong. Stepping into the Future is all about stepping because God is calling us.

In our scripture for today, Samuel is hearing his name being called. But **he is having a hard time understanding who is calling him.** Like Samuel, and like John Mayer in our song from earlier, we

are able to hear a call. The call may simply be to understand that something needs to happen. Sometimes, we misunderstand that God is calling us to make a difference.

We see the need for something to happen, to change in our world and even in our life. But instead of waiting for someone else to come and fix it, maybe God has placed within us the ability to recognize the need for change, so we can help be a part of bringing about change. Are you willing to step into the future and be a part of ministry for God?

In our scripture, when Eli is woken for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time by Samuel, he says, "If you hear the voice again, say, "Speak, God! I am your servant, and I am ready to listen."

Eli finally understood that we need to put ourselves in a position to hear God's call. For when we hear God's call, what we discover is that God does indeed want to impact the world. God wants to work with us and through us to help bring about the change that is needed in our world.

In the church, that means that God has called each and every one of us to be involved in mission and ministry. God wants to work in us and through us to make a difference. I am not saying that we have to put on a show. Nor am I saying that our faith is to be less than authentic. I am saying that there simply comes a time when the rubber hits the road. And we have to live our faith in the world. Life is about choices, isn't it?

There is a story told about Fiorello LaGuardia. He was the mayor of New York City during the worst days of the Great Depression and during all of World War II. Devoted New Yorkers called him "the little flower" because he was only 5'4" and always wore a carnation in his lapel.

He was a colorful character who used to ride the New York City fire trucks, and take entire orphanages to baseball games. Whenever New York papers were on strike, he used to go on radio and read the Sunday "funnies" to the kids."

One bitterly cold night in January of 1935, the mayor turned up at a night court that served the poorest ward of the city. LaGuardia dismissed the judge for the evening and took over the bench himself. Within a few minutes, a tattered old woman was brought before him, charged with stealing a loaf of bread. She told LaGuardia that her daughter's husband had deserted her, her daughter was sick, and her grandchildren were starving. But the shopkeeper, from whom the bread was stolen, refused to drop the charges. "It's a bad neighborhood, your Honor," the man told the mayor. "She's got to be punished to teach other people around here a lesson."

LaGuardia sighed. He turned to the woman and said, "I've got to punish you . . . The law makes no exceptions - ten dollars or ten days in jail." But even as he pronounced sentence, the mayor was already reaching into his pocket. He extracted a bill and tossed it into his famous hat, saying, "Here's the ten-dollar fine which I now remit; and furthermore, I'm going to fine everyone in this courtroom fifty cents for living in a town where a person has to steal bread so that her grandchildren can eat. Mr. Bailiff, collect the fines and give them to the defendant."

So the following day the New York City newspapers reported that \$47.50 were turned over to the bewildered old woman who had stolen a loaf of bread to feed her starving grandchildren, fifty cents of that amount being contributed by the red-faced grocery store owner, while some seventy petty criminals, people with traffic violations, and New York City policemen, each of whom had just paid fifty cents for the privilege of doing so, gave the mayor a standing ovation.

LaGuardia was willing to live his faith. He was willing to take his faith into the world and make a difference. Are you?

There are choices to make for each one of us here. We can certainly see the changes that need to take place in our world. Thankfully so does God. My hope and prayer is that we will be willing to see that God wants to work through us to be a part of those changes as a way to express our faith in Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God.

Amen