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Mid-week communion is often a quieter moment during a busy week, a time of calm. We come not in a rush, but in stillness. And for many of us, the years have taught us that listening matters more than speaking, and presence more than activity. Despite that some of us find that difficult to do. But life has a way of slowing us down, sometimes by choice, sometimes by necessity, and in that slowing we may discover that God has been speaking all along.

In the reading from Samuel, we are told that *“the word of the Lord was rare in those days.”* It is a time of uncertainty and change. Eli, the priest, is old, and his eyesight is failing. He cannot see clearly, yet he still plays an important part in God’s work. He may no longer be at the centre of events, but his experience and wisdom matter. It is Eli who helps the young Samuel understand what is happening. Even as his strength fades, his ability to listen and to help Samuel listen remains.

Samuel himself does not recognise God’s voice at first. He hears something, but he does not understand it. He assumes it must be Eli calling him, because that is the voice he knows. Only gradually does he learn that God can speak in unexpected ways, and that God’s voice does not always sound dramatic or overwhelming. Sometimes it sounds like a simple call in the night.

Learning to listen to God often takes time. It is not something we master quickly. Like Samuel, we may need patience, repetition, and the guidance of others. And when Samuel finally responds, his prayer is very simple: *“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”* It’s not a prayer of confidence, but of openness. It does not ask for answers or explanations, only for the grace to listen. It is a prayer that many of us can make, and do make.

In the Gospel, we meet someone who has known weakness and isolation for a long time. The leper comes to Jesus not with certainty, but with hope: *“If you choose, you can make me clean.”* He does not know what the outcome will be, but he trusts enough to speak. And Jesus listens, not just to the words, but to the need behind them. He responds not only with words, but with touch. In a world where this man had been kept at a distance, Jesus comes close. His compassion restores dignity as well as health.

Listening, in this sense, is never passive. It leads to attention, to presence, to developing a relationship. Jesus listens with his whole being, and his listening becomes healing.

That same Christ comes to us today. In Holy Communion, he meets us as we are with our memories, our gratitude, and our faith, just as it is. We bring with us the stories of our lives, the things we carry lightly and the things we carry quietly, and we lay them before God.

We come not because we are strong, or because we have everything figured out, but because we are loved. We come because Christ invites us, and because his mercy is enough. There is no need to pretend or to explain ourselves here. We are received with grace.

The bread and the wine are simple things, yet they speak of a deep truth: that Christ is present among us. In this sacrament, he draws near to us once again not as a distant figure, but as one who shares himself with us. He still chooses us, still offers himself for us, and still nourishes us with his life and peace.

So this morning this service is about listening. Listening with our hearts as much as our ears. It is about allowing God to speak in the stillness, and to meet us again with grace. In the silence of this place, and in the simplicity of this sacrament, God continues to call us by name.

And perhaps our prayer today can be no more complicated than Samuel's: *Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening.*

It is a prayer we can carry into the silence of this service, and into the days that follow, a prayer said not in a hurry, but with patience and trust. We may not always hear clearly, and we may not always understand, but we place ourselves before God, ready to listen in whatever way he chooses to speak.

And as we listen, may we know the peace of Christ, the one who still comes close, still meets us in our weakness, still touches our lives with compassion, and still speaks words of love and hope to all who are willing to listen. May that peace rest upon us all today, and remain with us in the week ahead.