

## Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> August Steve Scott

Good Morning guys, hope this day finds you well, bless you in the name of our Lord and Father, in Jesus Christ. In these strange times don't allow anyone to tell you it's normal, because it's not normal, as children, as a people, we were created for community, we were created for communion with God and one another, so I just want to bless you this morning, it's still good that we can meet over the airwaves, so bless you guys. Thank you Father God for this day and for Your fellowship and Your fellowship of believers.

I want to read from Samuel, a story we all know: 1 Samuel 3, 1-11 'The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions. <sup>2</sup>One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. <sup>3</sup>The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup>And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down. <sup>6</sup>Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." "My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." <sup>7</sup>Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. <sup>8</sup>A third time the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup>So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. <sup>10</sup>The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." <sup>11</sup>And the LORD said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle."

So Father God we thank You for Your word and ask for divine understanding of Your word and what You are doing.

I love this story of God revealing Himself to Israel's greatest prophet and leader, Samuel even when he was a just young boy.

There are lots of stories throughout the Bible, of God and Jesus' views or interaction with young people or youth and I'm sure you can bring some to mind. Whether you're thinking about Joseph as a young boy having dreams and being sold into slavery and his journey; whether you're thinking about Daniel, Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego, those young boys being taken off into exile in Babylon; or whether we're thinking about a young shepherd called David who was sent to the battle lines to take food for his brothers and what transpired there.

But in the story of Eli and Samuel it says that the word of The Lord was rare and that there were not many visions in those days, but yet still God wanted to reveal Himself to a young boy who was serving in the temple of the Lord.

Now Samuel didn't know the voice of The Lord and needed the older and wiser Eli to instruct him on what to do to enter into communion with The Lord.

But somehow, between you and me, we have made church and religious activities about us and our standing with The Lord, rather than about holding up our children and young people making straight and easy paths for them to meet with Jesus Our Lord and King.

Of recent years we have made church a spectator sport for our children, where we have been so busy looking inwardly and having our own desires met, that I fear many of our young ones who were brought up in Sunday school and church have somehow fallen by the wayside.

The reason I'm bringing this up this morning is I so want us to challenge the way that we think, to think outside the box, to think beyond ourselves, not just tomorrow, but the next year, the next five years. Before Rachel and I came to Shaftesbury we were youth pastors. For about 15 years we ministered with young children and youth. When we came here we thought we'd put that behind us, but now we really feel we should share this.

It has always amazed me that we know and realise that Jesus is always relevant to every age group in society and yet still as the church, the Body of Christ which represents Jesus Christ on earth, it's often not at all relevant to our youth, the next generation.

Before the world went into lockdown I was often aware of the young people in our midst/church meetings who had come along only at the request of their family and spent the entire service looking at their phone screens, because ashamedly, and I say ashamedly, we have somehow in our zeal for God demonstrated to them that there was nothing there for them.

Lord Jesus forgive us for so poorly representing You to our children, and I pray that You will help us Father God, to demonstrate Christianity, a love of God that is all inclusive, not only for us but for the younger generations as well. In John 14 Jesus says this to you and I:

**14** "Do not let your hearts be troubled. **You believe in God; believe also in me.** <sup>2</sup> **My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?** <sup>3</sup> **And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.** <sup>4</sup> **You know the way to the place where I am going."**

So you who are mature in the faith, you who have been walking with the Lord for so long settle it in your hearts, our lives are secure in Him for what can man do to us, for to be absent from this world is to be present in the Lord. We are secure in Him for He is faithful until the very end. So we need to settle it in our hearts, we're secure in Him, we're ok we really are.

But unlike us, are those who's destination is not secure, even though their stories have already been written, their lives and the lives of the children and young people around us, they are the most precious and valuable commodity we the church of Jesus Christ have, in insuring that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached to the ends of the earth, to every tribe, nation and tongue.

But under our noses, on our watch there is a myriad of worldly and ungodly entities and forces fighting for the hearts and souls of our young ones.

We should and need to do everything we can to pour into and equip our young people to be a generation who knows what it is to live for Christ; to know their worth in Him and to us, and to be so secure in who they are in Him that they will not easily be swayed or fall away when trouble or challenges come.

I want a church where people of all ages can discover who they are in Christ, not one that is endured by young people until they go off to university or leave home to discover who they are or more importantly who they are not. We need to help these young people build on a solid foundation which is Jesus Christ, even while they're young.

I'm sharing all this today because I want to challenge our thinking. I want to re-ignite our passion, our responsibility for the youth in our midst. The church should be a place where young children and youth grow up not only going to Sunday School and doing Bible studies, but through adolescence be a safe place to discover who they are, to discover what they believe, what they don't believe, to express their views, to have open conversations with mature believers and to get Godly wisdom in that place. But for so long we haven't really allowed young people to do that. We made

church something they're just brought along to and they're very rarely involved in, but we need to change that.

Like I was saying at the beginning of this morning's devotional, these are very strange and bizarre times that we are living in and I think we all need to adjust to how things are, without the view of things going back to normal before the world had changed. Because it is a different place now and we need to be wise in these days and seek wisdom from God on how to operate as the children of God that we've been called to be in this ever changing world. So I hope this morning I've given you guys food for thought, happy to speak to any of you at any time, but it's really a time for us to press in to God individually and see what God will bring about in this season. I bless your times with the Lord and be open to God speaking in new and wonderful ways in these days. God bless you all in the Name of Jesus, amen.