

## The Sermon - In 11 Sentences or Less

### It's Up to You (Week 3) - Hearing God?:



1) Yesterday's question came in several pieces, the first of which is, "Have I done something wrong or not right so that God won't speak to me?"

2) First, let's return to a core distinction of the Christian faith: whereas "religion" is so often about earning God's favor or somehow trying to please Him so He'll bless you, Christianity is about God's love and grace freely given (Eph. 2.8-9, for example).

3) Though God's grace is a given, we as humans struggle to grasp or accept, so the best case scenario is that we'll grow more and more sure and appreciative of it over the course of our lifetime (this is St. Paul's prayer in Eph. 3.18-19).

4) Also, the idea that God stops speaking to us when we stray or sin is by and large a faulty premise when analyzed biblically: the pattern we see in Genesis 3 is what we find throughout scripture...we sin and hide, and yet God calls out to us (Gen. 3.8-9).

5) The 2nd major facet of the email behind yesterday's sermon has to do with hearing God specifically.

6) Biblically speaking, God communicates to human beings in a host of ways; the Creator has all of creation at His disposal.

7) But, that said, God has two preferred or best ways to speak to us, the first of which is through the person of His Son (Hebrews 1.1-2; John 1.14, 18).

8) Second, His goal all along has been to speak to us "spirit to spirit" (Romans 8.16-17; 1st Cor. 2.11-13), which represents the fulfillment of the "New Covenant" in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 36.26-27), a reality we celebrate every time we take Communion together (Luke 22.20).

9) This leads us to conclude that while we sometimes wish for more obvious or grandiose forms of divine communication - like dreams, visions, audible voices, etc. - these do not represent God's ideal and most common way of speaking with us.

10) This means it's crucial for each of us to develop spiritual habits, routines, and rhythms that allow us to connect with God "spirit to spirit," that is, from the depth of our being to His.

11) Thus, there is no room for comparison or hierarchy, it's never about "my way" of hearing God being better or superior to "your way."

## Quotes to Chew On

1) Martin Luther on the universal struggle to grasp God's grace - "The sin underneath all our sins is to trust the lie...that we cannot trust the love and grace of Christ and must take matters into our own hands...To be convinced in our hearts that we have forgiveness of sins and peace with God by grace alone is the hardest thing."

2) The late Brennan Manning on God's unmerited love for you, me, and all of us - "Do you believe that the God of Jesus loves you beyond worthiness and unworthiness, beyond fidelity and infidelity—that he loves you in the morning sun and in the evening rain—that he loves you when your intellect denies it, your emotions refuse it, your whole being rejects it. Do you believe that God loves without condition or reservation and loves you this moment as you are and not as you should be."

3) The late Dallas Willard on the importance of prioritizing how God wants to communicate, which is different than what we might want from Him: "If we give primacy to forms of communication that God does not on the whole prefer...that will hinder our understanding and cooperation with His voice, perhaps even totally frustrating His will for us."

4) John C. Dorhauer (General Minister of the United Church of Christ) on our God who is still speaking -

"God is still speaking.

At the very least, that requires us to still be listening.

How is it you open yourself up to hear anew the voice of a still speaking God?

Sacred moments and new truth and inspired wisdom can come to us along many pathways. Some moments of insight are approached through disciplines we cultivate for that very purpose. Other epiphanies come utterly by surprise, the product less of our cultivation than of some unexpected inspiration that the universe conspires to create.

Gentle traveler on these blessed pathways, remain in a spirit of openness to a new truth that your God can and will speak to you. And may the insights you collect along the way grant you wisdom, make you a seeker of peace, and lift you up on your journey into the mystery of God, amen."

## More for This Week

1) This week, try a little spiritual experiment: each day, ask God to speak to You, with no exceptions of how or what He might say. Then go about your days with your eyes and heart open, waiting to see what He might say, not to mention when, how, and through whom/what. Take stock at week's end at what He's said to you.

2) Check out this fascinating article by Richard Foster about his own intentional effort to listen to God's Spirit over the span of 3+ weeks:

[An Everyday Experiment in Hearing God - Richard J. Foster](#)

3) A great article about barriers to hearing God by the late Dallas Willard:

[Barriers to Hearing God - Dallas Willard](#)

4) Scripture reading this week:

- Check out Ezekiel 16 as an example of how God still speaks to us even at our lowest or worst (pay attention to all the times the Lord keeps talking throughout the chapter):

[Ezekiel 16 NRSVA](#)

- Read 1st Corinthians 12-13, written especially about the danger of comparison (whether about spiritual gifts or the more flashy ways God might communicate):

[1 cor 12-13 NRSVA](#)