

Sunday, June 19, 2022 Pentecost2 ***“God in Silence”***

I Kings 19:1-15 Galatians 3:23-39 Luke 8: 26-39

A young family is enjoying a quiet evening at home. The parents are downstairs in the living room reading and watching television. The children are upstairs playing together. There is much laughter and discussion as they interact and play together. But then, the parents notice something, the children are quiet. What do the parents do? Of course they go upstairs to see what the children were doing that moves them into silence. What they discover is not necessarily the result of the silence but the reason for this story is the silence. Is it good?

When was the last time you truly experienced silence? If you stop for a moment even in the sanctuary or whatever room are watching this livestream, is it truly silent? Maybe you hear the AC turn on, a clock or two ticking, the refrigerator going, a cat meowing. Here in the sanctuary you might hear the hum of the organ ready to go, fans moving or even just the sound of others breathing in and out. My question to you is this, is there ever a time in your day when you can be fully silent?

In our world today, we have so many ways to hear noise and interact with others that defining silence is often with the question, for how long? We know that in these next two months of summer many people will escape to a quiet place for a time of silence whether alone or with others. The need for silence is something that we seek to physically recharge, to clear one's mind and of course turn to God.

In 1964, Simon and Garfunkel introduced the world to the song “The Sound of Silence” in tribute to their friend Sanford Greenberg. Their friend had become blind while they attended university together and realized that in silence, he could hear the world in a different way than they could. They wrote this song because at that time (mid 1960's) there was evidence “of the inability of people to communicate with each other, not particularly intentionally but especially emotionally, so what you see around you are people unable to love each other.” This song has been recorded by others including “Disturbed” in 2016 which calls us all to wonder where is silence? Why is silence so important for us today? During the lockdown days of 2020 there

certainly was silence as no cars moved and all were at home. But did people take advantage of this time, or merely fill it with something else.

The prophet Elijah's story is shared in I Kings and tells the story of one person's faithfulness to serving God in Israel. God speaks to him in moments of silence to tell him what he wants Elijah to do. God first tells him to speak to King Ahab and Queen Jezebel that there would be a famine. The famine did occur but they did nothing to prepare. Another time he warns the King and Queen turn away from Baal their god or be killed. Elijah has shown the people of Israel that God is real but Queen Jezebel threatens Elijah's life because she does not believe in God. Elijah escapes to Mount Horeb guided by an angel. This is the place where he will meet God. He is told to stand on the mountain. There Elijah encounters a great wind, following by an earthquake and fire. But God did not speak to him during those times. It was when all was calm and quiet that God speaks and tells Elijah to go back to Israel to take Elisha as his disciple. Change has occurred in Israel and it is time to have the people return to God.

God speaks to Elijah in silence. Have you heard God in silence? Just think about a time in your life that was traumatic, caused much grief, or when there was anger or words were shared and there was pain. Maybe there was heartache, physical pain, or something happened in you, bringing you to have mental health concerns or spiritual uncertainty with regard to God in your life. What was the gentle whisper that enabled you to get through these times? Maybe it was the sound of waves on a beach, the purring of a cat, a child's voice, or a special song and its lyrics speaking to you. When we feel overwhelmed by fear, anger and despair, we are to listen for the still, quiet voice of God. After listening to God speak, Elijah became a man of action and brought the people of Israel back to God. After you heard God in the silence, what did you do?

God's Spirit moves in you to do amazing things for others. Jesus met a man known to have demons, lived in the tombs and went around naked. He was truly having mental issues and yet he identified Jesus –as the Son of the Most High God and asked him that he not be tormented. Jesus asked him his name. "Legion"- which actually referred to the many demons within him. Today this man might be diagnosed with schizophrenia, or having multiple personalities. Jesus saw the man and not the problems he had. This man could not sit in silence

nor could he be bound with chains and shackles as he would break free and then run into the wild. Jesus wanted to help this man to be able to live amongst the people and so he saw a solution. He saw a large herd of swine- pigs- nearby and when Jesus ordered the demons out of the man, they went into the pigs. The Pigs then rushed down the bank into the lake and drowned. Those looking after the pigs ran and the people what they witnessed with the pigs. The people came to Jesus. They saw “Legion” who was now healed sitting at Jesus’ feet, clothed, calm and doing all right. The people were afraid because they did not understand that Legion was now sitting in silence with Jesus the Son of God. The people grew angry and told Jesus to leave. Legion wanted to be with Jesus but instead of instructing him in silence of what to do, Jesus told him, go home and tell others how much God has done for you. He did as Jesus asked.

Legion had not known silence in his mind until Jesus healed him. He had not known Jesus as the teacher but he now knew that the Son of God had healed him. He also knew that he needed only to speak to God to know what to do.

Often when we think about the world and its problems, we are overwhelmed. There is a legion of reasons why we should be living in fear—diseases, wars, economic problems, struggles with the cost of everything rising, dangerous roads, and uncertainty of what tomorrow will bring. Change is occurring rapidly in some areas but in other aspects of our lives we are just aging. But because we are people of God, called into community with Christ Jesus as the one true head of the church, we experience the Spirit moving in our midst and we can be still and know that God is on our side. God is with us. All we need to do is be patient and trust in God because he will see us through all the changes and challenges we will face.

Paul wrote to the church in Galatia that it is by faith that we are the children of God. By faith, we come together to worship this day and shared in the sacrament of baptism. It is a beginning for this little boy to know that he belongs to God. Because he is baptized we- you and I are connected to him through Jesus Christ. Just like the song we sang earlier- we’re all part of the family of God and Abraham’s offspring! This is worth shouting about and worth repeating. We need to be happy because Christ loves us. Yet there is also reason to stop for a moment and

listen to God as we celebrate this new beginning for our church family. God's Spirit is not dead as some have thought these last couple of years; Christ is amongst us and calling to those who need to be healed. The Spirit is still moving to those who sit in silence and experience God's voice. God will come to us as well. But, we must be willing to listen for the voice of God? To look within ourselves and see that we are in need of guidance and strength, or healing of our hearts, minds and bodies. If we are willing, we can tell how Jesus may bring wholeness to our lives and how God speaks to you?

How does God speak to you today? Is it in silence? Or through God's amazing creation with the forces of earth, wind, fire, sun; or in the beauty of flowers, as we see crops growing in fields? Or do we experience God's voice as we read the Bible passages which speak of faith and hope; not fearing anything? Or even knowing that God is listening and watching over us in all we say and do. All we need to do is give our lives to God and He will be our strength and our shield if we have faith and believe. God hears us and speaks to us even in this moment. Let us pray in SILENCE>. .... Amen.