

Turn Your Radio On, Pt. 1

After preaching a sermon last Sunday that touched on hearing God's voice, it occurred to me that someone might be concerned about the place of the Bible. If God speaks to us at the center of our innermost being, and makes Himself and His will known there, what about the Bible? If the small still voice within is the word of God then is the Bible also the word of God? Just in case anyone is thinking about this, or starts to think about this, let me be clear. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness," II Timothy 3:16. The Bible is the inspired word of God, and guides and judges every other word we hear. So, hearing the word of God from the inside out does not make the Bible obsolete. In fact, it makes it even more important that we know what God has said to us in Scripture, so we can test everything else we hear. It makes it a whole lot easier to discern God's contemporary voice if we know what He has said to His people in the past. We still need the Bible!

But with that assurance given, I want to say more this morning about hearing God speaking to us from the inside out. Specifically, what do we need to do to position ourselves to hear the inner voice of God. Many years ago Albert E. Brumley wrote a song with the Chorus that said:

"Turn your radio on And listen to the music in the air, Turn your radio on And glory to share Turn the lights down low And listen to the Master's Radio, Get in touch with God Turn your radio on."

Now Brother Brumley wasn't talking about flipping the switch on you're AM or FM radio; He was talking about tuning your heart to God's frequency; he was talking about turning your life on to God. And that's the question for this morning. How do we tune our hearts to hear from God? We can be sure that it is the nature of God to speak; He is always reaching out to us; He is always broadcasting. His signal is always going out to all the world; but, how do we get aligned to hear His voice?

I don't know about you but ever since I was a child I've been fascinated by man's quest to pick up voices or signals from outer space. The image of humongous dish antennas searching the heavens for communication from beyond is stamped on my psyche. The 1982 Steven Spielberg sci-fi movie ET was so popular because it tapped into this quest for extraterrestrial communication. "ET phone home" is a well known phrase, still used in popular culture. I strongly suspect that this human yearning for contact from beyond is not a passing fad or the product of the mid-Twentieth Century space race. It's a God thing--

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Pascal's "God-shaped vacuum," longing to be filled, or Augustine's "Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." Living in a fallen world, we all feel somewhat stranded and can identify with E.T.'s passion to "phone home." But where do we start and how do we align ourselves to hear His voice?

The first bit of good news about this that we need to hear is explained in Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son. In the parable we find that the Father was watching for and looking out for his son even before the son came to his senses and started searching for his father. In other words, God communicates to us long before we sense any urgency to communicate with Him. According to passages like Psalm 19, God speaks to us through His creation: Psalm 19:1-4a say: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. . ." Romans 1:20 adds, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." **God is calling to us through all He has made.**

Two other ways that God has made Himself known to people are discovered in Hebrews 1:1-3a. There we are told: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. . . **God speaks to us through His prophets and then through His Son Jesus Christ.**

Are you catching the theme that God is rather talkative? According to Genesis 1:3 and following, God spoke the world into existence and has been speaking to us ever since. He speaks to us through creation, through the prophets, through His Son, through the Scriptures, through our mistakes, and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit deep within every believer. But again, how do we tune our hearts to hear Him?

The first thing to recognize about hearing God is that we hear with our hearts. Above everything else, we need to remember that God is love and love speaks the language of the heart. So when I'm talking about hearing God's voice, I'm not talking about hearing with our ears. I don't know too many people who claim to have heard the audible

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voice of God and, frankly, I worry about some who say they have. This is not to say that God can't or that He never speaks out loud. He did this at Jesus' baptism and at Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road, but this is not His usual way of speaking. Normally, it is more intimate heart to heart. "I will write my laws on their hearts," He says. So the first clue to hearing God is to pay attention to your heart. What are you hearing in the depth of your heart? Sure, you will see things with your eyes and you will get input through your ears. All of our senses are channels through which God can and does speak to us, but the communication we are looking for and need the most will happen in the heart. **God speaks to us "heart to heart."**

We need to listen for God in our hearts. Secondly, if we are going to tune our hearts to hear God speak, we need to begin to listen with the heart of a child. In John 3, Jesus told Nicodemus that he could not see the kingdom of God unless he was willing to be born again--to become like a little baby. In Mark 10:15 and Luke 18:17, Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." The thing about a little child that distinguishes them from adults is that they are utterly flexible and teachable. They can be taught to hate or they can be taught to love. They can be taught to be selfish or give everything they have away to help others. They can be taught to respect authority or to cast it off. You can shape a child. So if we are to be as little children before the Lord, we have to come to him shapeable, open to and hungry for His input. Desiring to be molded into His image. **If we want to hear God's voice we need to come as little children; we must be "shapeable."**

As I was thinking about this last week, God spoke to my heart something very precious. One of the things the enemy would throw in our faces at this point is that God doesn't have the time to be bothered with the likes of us. You know, He's busy running the universe, why would he take the time to speak to you and me? And, isn't that why He gave us the Bible, so we could read it for ourselves without Him needing to tutor us? The disciples of Jesus must have thought something like that one day when some parents tried to bring their children to Jesus to be blessed. The disciples tried to prevent them. They indicated that the Master couldn't be bothered with the little ones. But when Jesus got wind of what they were doing, His anger flared. He said, "let the little children come to me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." And what I heard God saying to me in this was that anytime you or I should humble ourselves and come to the Lord with childlike hearts, we are guaranteed an audience. If we come in the right spirit, humble and shapeable, He will receive us and he will speak to us heart to heart. **"Our Father in**

Heaven always has time and a word of blessing for His children.

If we want to hear God's voice we need to listen with our hearts and we need to come before God with a childlike spirit. A third thing we need to do to position ourselves to hear God's voice is to come with faith and confidence in His goodness and in His kindness. Do we understand that He wants to bless us even more than we want to be blessed? You see, one of the things that keeps us from hearing God's voice is fear. We're not sure we want to hear from God because we're not sure we want to hear what He has to say to us. But know this: If you have invited Jesus Christ into your life as Savior and Lord, and if it is therefore your desire to live for Him, you are God's child. John 1:12 says that "as many as received Him, as many as believed on His name, He gave the right to become the children of God." And, if you are God's child you have nothing to fear from God's voice. Jesus says in Matthew 7:9-11 "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" Paul puts it this way in Romans 8:1-2: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." **The Lord will not give evil nor hold back blessing from His children who put their trust in Him.**

I have several more points about positioning ourselves to hear the voice of God, and I'll give them to you in a future sermon, but I want to dwell for a moment on this third one about coming to God with faith and confidence in His goodness and in His kindness. Some of us have been saddled with a disadvantage here because the father figures and authority figures in our lives as children were not welcoming and some of them were quite cruel. Some of us bear wounds from parents who never seemed to have the time for us, who swore at us, or consistently put us down. Some of us were shamed or belittled by teachers or coaches. Some of us were abused verbally, physically, or even sexually. This makes it hard to trust anyone, makes it hard to believe that anyone in authority can be kind. Some of us were abused spiritually by images of an angry God holding little children by a thread over pit of hell. What we need in these cases is inner healing.

Three things need to occur for this healing to come. First of all, we need to revisit the truth revealed in Hebrews 1, that Jesus "is the exact likeness of God's own being." Then we need to familiarize ourselves with the way Jesus treated people throughout the gospels. He never abused anyone and the only ones He ever had a harsh word for were

those who abused others. Anyone who ever came to Him with trusting childlike faith, was warmly received and loved and healed.

Once we see who Jesus was and is, and once we understand that when we have seen Him we have seen the true nature of God the Father, then we can embrace the second thing we need for healing and that is this: We need to confront and denounce and grieve the things said and done to us as children and as young adults that were obviously not of God. Take each memory of wounding and pray it through before the Lord. Often it will be necessary to share these with a trusted Christian friend or small group of brothers or sisters who will empathize with your experience and support you in prayer. We all need to grieve the losses experienced through these assaults upon our souls. Dr. Terry Wardle, from Ashland Theological Seminary, says "every loss in life requires an appropriate season of grieving."

The third thing we need for healing for our inner wounds is a new encounter or series of encounters with the real and living God. Here we quiet ourselves before the Lord and invite Him to come and help us to hear what He has said and is saying that counteracts every lie and evil we have received from the enemy of our souls. For example, you may have been called or treated as though you were "ugly," "worthless," or "weakling." Take these things before the Lord as ask Him what He says, and you will hear something entirely different. You will hear, "you are the apple of my eye," "you are the pearl of great price," "you are more than a conqueror, through Him that loves you." The Lord has an answer for every evil word and for every evil thing ever said or done to you, and if you will hear and receive these answers, it will open your heart to hear every other word that the Lord wants to speak into your life.

God wants to speak to us heart to heart. He invites us to come as children, shapeable in His presence. He wants us to come with faith in Him and with confidence in His goodness. Many of us will need to seek and receive inner healing to hear what the Lord has to say to us. But of one thing I am sure, God will speak to us if we will humble ourselves to listen.

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Mark 9:36-37; 10:13-16; Hebrews 1:1-3

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