

Listening to God's Voice

C- Eph 5: Luke 5:1-11; Isaiah 6:1-8

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Children's Sermon:

Would you like to hear God's voice and know what God wants you to do in your life? How can you hear God's voice? You think maybe you'll get a phone call from God?

That's really what the Church and coming to church is all about. We try to make things happen so you might hear God's voice: we sing songs; we read the Bible; we listen to sermons; we say prayers; we receive the bread and wine at communion; we go to Sunday School. We do all these things for the same reason – so all of us might find a moment, or have an experience, where we might hear God's voice.

Everything we do at church is to help you and everyone else out there, hear God's voice, and better understand what God wants us to do. So if you come to church regularly, and pay attention, and listen, I am sure you will hear God's voice calling you on a life adventure, and leading and guiding you in your life journey. That's why everybody comes to church - to hear God's voice.

Now have you ever **seen** God? How can you have a conversation with God, or heard God's voice if you can't see God? In our reading from the book of Isaiah, how did Isaiah have a conversation with God? He had a **vision** or a **dream**. He saw God on a throne surrounded by dragons. One dragon flew over to him and put a burning coal on his lips. Yikes. Good thing that was a dream and not real!

But Isaiah heard God's voice in his vision, his dream. And when God asked, "Who can I send to lead my people?" Isaiah said, "Here I am. If you want me to lead your people, send me." So Isaiah heard God's voice in a dream, and discovered a plan for his life.

How did **Peter** hear God's voice in our Gospel reading calling him to leave his fishing career and become a follower of Jesus? Peter listened to Jesus' sermon. And then Jesus managed to fill Peter's fishing nets full of fish. More fish than he had ever caught before. Peter realized Jesus was a holy person, and his first response was, "I'm a sinner; a bad person." But Jesus said, "Follow me." And Peter did and he began to hear God's voice through following Jesus.

So, every time you are at church, or every time you go to Sunday School, or every time you hear a weird children's sermon, listen: God may be talking to you.

Adult Sermon:

When Isaiah felt like he was lost, a man of unclean lips, living with a people of unclean lips, feeling unable and unequipped to lead God's people, he had a vision or dream of the Lord sitting on a high throne with Seraphs, dragons with 6 wings. And one of the seraphs flew to him holding a live coal taken from the altar fire and touched Isaiah's lips and said "your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." And then the Lord said, "whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" and Isaiah responded, "Here am I; send me!"

Isaiah had no idea, he couldn't even imagine that he could become a leader of God's people. He knew he was a sinner. But he was **willing to listen** when he thought he might be hearing God's voice. Isaiah was willing to listen to a weird dream or a vision he was having. And he finally realized that God was speaking to him through this dream or vision. He had the courage to listen, and respond, and follow God's way, and become a leader.

If someone had told me when I was a young teenage Southern Baptist that someday I'd become a progressive, liberal Episcopal Priest, I would have laughed out loud. But, as I've shared before, I did have some of my first "epiphanies" or "visions" as a teenager. And one time, I went to visit with my Baptist pastor to share some ideas that were popping up in my head. When I told him some clearly **non-Baptist** ideas I was having, he immediately said, "You are no longer saved!" You have to walk the isle again and be re-baptized!" Which I did, because otherwise, I would probably have been kicked out of the church.

If someone had told me while I was a Wall-Street lawyer, about to be made partner, that I should quit my law practice and move to the country and find a new direction for my life, I would have said, "Hell no!" But then, as you've heard before, at a George Winston concert, I heard a voice in my head saying, "Leave your law practice. Move to the country. Listen for my voice." And I did.

My family, and many of my friends thought I was crazy. But fortunately, my new girlfriend and soon to be wife, Julie, supported me. I doubt she really understood what was going on, but she was willing to walk with me. [By the way, my 66th birthday present from Julie, are tickets to a George Winston concert in Austin this Wednesday. I better keep my ears and spirit open. Might hear some new directions.]

Peter had spent most of his life as a fisherman. And then he had a strange encounter with Jesus, on the shore of the lake. He didn't even know who Jesus was. And after

Jesus had spoken to the crowds from Peter's boat, he asked Peter, after hours of unsuccessful fishing, to cast his nets on the other side, and he filled two nets with tons of fish.

Peter fell to his knees and asked Jesus to go away because "I am a sinful man." Why would he say that? He had just heard Jesus preach a "sermon." He understood that this man was deeply spiritual, based on the sermon he just preached to the people, and the catch of all the fish. Peter realized that up to this point in his life he had **not** been focused on **following God's Way**. But Jesus responded, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." And Peter followed Jesus.

We will all have similar experiences if we listen to God's voice. There will be moments in our lives when we and our world like Isaiah's and Peter's and mine, will be turned upside down. And we will be blessed if we **listen** to God, and **follow** God's way.

We have had so many Reconcilers who have listened and heard God's voice and discerned God's call for their life journeys. We've had many called to go to seminary and called to become a priest or a chaplain. We've had many called to take on lay pastoral care roles within our faith community. We've had many called to help prepare events like breakfasts and coffee hour to help bring us together as a spiritual family. We've had many called to take care of and nurture our campus, to make this a beautiful and holy space where we can experience our Creator God.

Everyone who **listens** will eventually **hear** God's voice calling them to use their gifts and talents to be part of one of our "spiritual" teams so that we can all come together to love God and to love our neighbors. And, so we can create an atmosphere where others can hear God's voice.

Some of us may need hearing aids, **spiritual** hearing aids. We may need someone to help us discern our gifts and help us hear our call, like maybe a **spiritual director**. That's OK. And if we do so, if we discern our gifts and discern our call, we will be blessed (even if we needed hearing aids). Like Isaiah, and like Peter, we are all called to **listen** to God's voice and **follow** God's Way, and use our **God-given** gifts and skills.

Amen