

Holy Listening

We're going to talk about an invitation to Holy Listening.

There are two moments when listening changed everything. Things were formless and dark, and then God spoke. Creation heard the voice of God and responded. It turned on the lights. Deepest darkness listened to the call of the Lord and let light in to have its way. Another voice interjected itself into creation. And sadly there were receptive ears. The father of lies spoke and receptive ears took it in. "Surely God has not said..." The woman listened to the lie that would lead her down a false path.

This is an invitation to think about what you say and whom you listen to—to consider how you listen to God, how you listen to your own life, how you listen to the world around us, how you listen through the day, and even how you listen through the night. Where are you with your listening skills? Richard Rohr says, "A good journey begins knowing where we are and being willing to go somewhere else." Are you willing to go somewhere else with your listening?

Part of our reason for tuning out each other, ourselves, creation, and God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is that where we are is very familiar. "It might be messy, but it's mine." The buzz of the familiar can drown out the language of the holy. We need to readjust and be attuned to living an ordinary day.

There is hearing, and there is listening. There is obeying, and there is paying attention. Each seems to have its own nuance. Sometimes our frenetic lives drown out small voices. We need to tune our hearts toward hearing the holy in the midst of the ordinary. We need to be adept at listening well to the things that really matter. Can we attune ourselves to hear without God needing to shout at us?

We need to listen with the big picture in mind. We need to listen with our smallness and our selfishness set aside. We need to listen to ourselves and our bodies in a generous and faithful fashion. We must bring this same act of listening to our conversations. We need to be "all in." When we come to a conversation, we should come with all our attention; we need to come with our ears of love. Paul Tillich says the first duty of love is to listen. The opposite of talking is *not* waiting to talk.

Leave room to hear what's not being said. Listen to discern with the Holy Spirit. Learn to practice holy listening. Be willing to let silence do the heavy lifting in dialogue. The practice of paying attention in the midst of the ordinary gives us opportunity to hear the extraordinary.

This leads to the question: How does God speak?


11 And God said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

12 And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

13 And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

Elijah was given time to let go of his own agenda. In these purposefully emptied spaces, God can take up residence.





The world is giving you
answers each day.
Learn to listen.

We are also invited to listen to the world around us. We've stepped away from saying we can hear God in nature, because we are afraid of becoming too ethereal or mystical. But we need to return to the remembrance that God has made creation and he has made it for you.

We also need to remember that God can speak to us in the night. There is great joy in knowing that God is there watching over us through the night. Sometimes in the darkness of the night we have ears to hear a little more clearly.

We can also listen in the midst of a busy day. The kingdom of God is never far away. He wants to be with us, speaking to us, through the events of every busy day.

For Reflection:

- What are some ways that you listen to God? To those around you? To the events of the day? To creation?
- How would you describe having ears of love? What are some things that hinder us from being loving listeners? What might be some qualities of a loving listener?
- What are some things that you could do to help you listen better? How could you start to put those things into practice?