

**HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY**  
**May 27, 2018**

Text: Psalm 29

Theme: The Voice of God

A man was having difficulty communicating with his wife and he concluded that she was becoming hard of hearing. So he decided to conduct a test without her knowing about it. One evening he sat in a chair on the far side of the room. Her back was to him and she could not see him. Very quietly he whispered –

*Can you hear me?* There was no response.

He moved a little closer and asked her again if she could hear him but there was still no reply. Quietly he edged closer and whispered the same question but still no answer. Finally he moved right behind her chair and repeated the question one more time. And to his surprise and chagrin she responded with irritation in her voice –

*For the fourth time, yes!*

*Do you hear me now?* From Hebrews – Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ... therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard so that we do not drift away from it.

In Judaism and Christianity, the voice of God is described as a sound that comes from heaven to proclaim the will of God or his judgment. Based on the conversations I have with people (it is safe to assume) that most of us wish we could hear that voice of God as clearly as Isaiah did when he had that vision in the temple. But after giving that some thought I decided that the sight of the Lord sitting on a throne (high and lofty) with angelic beings swirling around him would be more frightening than exciting. It would be better if we could have an encounter with God like that of Nicodemus who had an opportunity to sit down and talk with Jesus face-to-face.

It would be so amazing to have God as close as we are to each other this morning. God could whisper in our ears the plans God has for our lives. God could tell us exactly what we are to do so that our decisions align with his will.

In the Old Testament God spoke through the prophets and in the New Testament God spoke through his Son. *How do we hear God now?*

From my own experiences there are so many different channels through which God can and will communicate with us. So let me start with a simple example.

I have never heard a divine voice whisper in my ear but I have been (what I like to call) nudged. In my first parish I always entered the local hospital through the back stairs. It was part of my exercise routine. But then on this one day I felt a nudge so I entered the hospital through the emergency room and I noticed that one of my members was sitting in the waiting room. If I had taken the stairs I would not have seen her. God placed me there at the right time.

Some would say that was just a coincidence. I choose to say it was God who led me there. On that day I learned that when I have the urge to take a new path I must be watchful to see what God wants me to see. I learned to trust God to take the lead. And ever since that day (which was over twenty years ago) I find myself purposefully being attentive to the people I encounter. I watch for what God wants me to see and hear and if there is any opportunity to touch the lives of others I do so believing that God is the one who sent me there.

God may not come down to us with a booming voice but we can train ourselves to listen to the subtle ways God moves us through our days. We can train ourselves to be flexible so that when our days are interrupted we do not become frustrated but instead we look to see where God might be leading us.

God has never talked to me face-to-face but on Wednesday mornings the *Overview of the Bible* class has led those of us in attendance to experience God in a very real and tangible way. We just completed the books of the Old Testament and we spent this week sharing the insights we gained from our year-long study. It was incredible to sit and listen to their reflections. We learned a lot about God, our creator, who wants to have a lasting relationship with us. We sat in awe of God who will do anything to maintain that bond with us despite our rebellious behavior.

We have a renewed appreciation for the intricate way the Bible was put together and then placed in our hands for it is in the pages of our Bible (the Living Word) that we begin to learn his will for us.

We are to be the stewards of his creation.

We are to be obedient to his laws.

We are to forgive as we have been forgiven.

We are to worship God alone.

We are to use our resources for the good of all.

We are to love others as God loves us.

And we study that list and know that God placed us on this earth to be his stewards. We know we are to obey him and worship him and use our resources to tend to the poor. We know we are to forgive and we are to love ... but we also want a different list. We want to know the will of God for ourselves as individuals.

So in the absence of the real presence of God (as experienced by Isaiah and Nicodemus) we begin to listen to the many voices in the world that clamor for our attention. We listen to the voices of those who are close to us and seek their advice before we make decisions. We hear the voice of Satan who every day lies to us and leads us to be tempted to sin because he is so deceptive and wily in his ways. And then we add our own voices into the mix.

I believe we can convince ourselves to do almost anything without much effort. Is it really our desire to know the will of God or do we want God to conform to our will? Is it really our desire to know his plans for us or do we simply want God to confirm what we already want to do? We often approach God for his guidance when we have already made up our minds. We know the path we want to take. We simply want God to rubber stamp our decisions.

It is critical that we understand that God is already speaking to us. We are to train ourselves to listen. It takes time, effort, and focus. It takes practice to think about God so much throughout our days that when we feel that nudge to go a new way we do so with all of our senses alert to what God wants us to see and do. And it requires us to be okay with whatever we hear from God especially if it is not what we expected or wanted.

There are so many channels by which God speaks to us. It is through his written word. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is through these stained glass windows and the dove mosaic. It is in our internal ability to discern right from wrong. God speaks to us through those who have the grace to show us the love of God in their words and by their acts of kindness. God speaks to us through the people who can see us through the eyes of God and not through the eyes of humanity. God speaks to us through his Son, Jesus Christ, who comes and offers us his unconditional love and forgiveness and the promise of a new life.

Our God is not a distant God. God is near enough that when he whispers to us – *Can you hear me now?*

We will be able to respond –

*Yes, Lord, your servant is listening! Amen*