

Into the Wilderness || A Series Through Lent

Silence

Sermon Synopsis: God calls us into the silence of the wilderness to clear our hearts from our own noise.

1 Kings 19:1-15 (ESV)

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. **2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.”** **3 Then he was afraid**, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. **4 But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness** and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.” **5** And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. **And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, “Arise and eat.”** **6** And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. **7** And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, “Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.” **8** And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, **“What are you doing here, Elijah?”** **10** He said, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” **11** And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke 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 the sound of a low whisper.** **13 And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood** at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” **14** He said, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” **15** And the Lord said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.

Intro: Todd Hewitt and the Noise

The “noise” makes it hard to hear God

The average person is inundated with about **34Gb** of info every day (or 105,000 words)

Avg. words spoken by a person every day: 15,000(?).

So the equivalent of **7 people** talking to you every day, all the time!

American psychiatrist Edward Hallowell, *“never in human history, our brains had to work so much information as today. We have now a generation of people who spend many hours in front of a computer monitor or a cell phone and who are so busy in processing the information received from all directions, so they lose the ability to think and feel. Most of this information is superficial. People are sacrificing the depth and feeling and cut off from other people.”*

Noise: the nonstop, never-ending stream of words and images that floods our minds daily, making it difficult to know what is good and what is not.

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, **“So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.”** Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. (1 Kings 19:1-3, ESV)

Where we might hear noise:

- People
- Situations
- Ourselves

What noise are you hearing?

Can eventually drive to the bottom.

Elijah, one of the most successful prophets of the age, finds himself in the *wilderness* too.

But he himself went a day's journey **into the wilderness** and came and sat down under a broom tree. (1 Kings 19:4, ESV)

Wilderness: seasons where life is difficult and you can't hear God

The noise is INSIDE of us

"I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and **I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.**" (1 Kings 19:10)

God asks twice, and Elijah just puts this on repeat. **It's like a script embedded in his mind**

God is still speaking

1. Acts of His mercy

Broom trees were the only shrub to offer shade in this dry desert region.

Even in the wilderness, God is present and working! (just not the way you expect)

1. Acts of provision

And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. **And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat."** (1 Kings 19:5, ESV)

1. A different way of speaking

And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke 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.** And after the earthquake a fire, but **the Lord was not in the fire.**

And after the fire **the sound of a low whisper.** **And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood** (1 Kings 19:12-13)

God whispers to reveal that...

Nothing exposes the fragility of our hearts like silence and solitude.

Because (like Elijah) all the noise (words) we are used to, come to depend on, hide behind, and even use to control the situation is *stripped away*. Whisper = a thin silence

Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline

We are so accustomed to relying upon words to manage and control others. If we are silent, who will take control? God will take control, but we will never let him take control until we trust him. Silence is intimately related to trust. The tongue is our most powerful weapon of manipulation. A frantic stream of words flows from us because we are in a constant process of adjusting our public image. We fear so deeply what we think other people see in us that we talk in order to straighten our their understanding...Silence is one of the deepest Disciplines of the Spirit simply because it puts the stopper on all self-justification.

So God draws his people into silence/solitude where we can learn to hear His whispers

Other examples of solitude and silence:

- Moses
 - Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights. (Exodus 24:18)
- David
 - For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. (Psalm 62:5)
- Paul
 - nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. (Galatians 1:17-18)
- Mary
 - But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. (Luke 2:19)
- Jesus
 - Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.. (Mark 1:35, NIV)

Silence and solitude was Jesus' response to almost everything!

- In response to tragic news (Matt. 14:12-13)
- In order to pray (Matt. 14:23, Luke, 5:16)
- In company with his closest companions (Matt. 26:36-46)
- Amid the demands of ministry (Mark 1:32-39)
- In seeking guidance for making major decisions (Luke 6:12-13)
- To elude the crowd's attempts to control the events of his life (John 6:15)

Clearly...the need to pull away from the noise was important to Jesus.

Why is silence so important?

1. To strip us from the noise

Mark 6:30-31 (ESV)

The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

*Takes practice! (v14)

1. To learn to hear what really matters

John 10:27

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

Sometimes we need to pull away from the noise

There is a way of knowing God's presence that goes beyond the senses (the noise)

Where we learn to hear God in our "innermost being" (John 7:38). Made possible: Christ

When noise distracts us from God's presence, we must slow down, enter the wilderness of silence and solitude, and learn to listen to God. Some need silence in your prayer life!

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Create small moments of silence when possible, where it's ok to not have words, to not solve problems, to not think about your to-do list, to not fill your mind with distraction. And use those moments to quietly lean on God. Can be 5 minutes!

If you don't know what that looks like, we are going to practice it together for a moment.