

God Still Speaks

God is heard by those with open hearts and minds.

.....Exodus 3: 1 – 15.....

“Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ²There an angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³So Moses thought, ‘I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up.’ ⁴When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, ‘Moses! Moses!’ And Moses said, ‘Here I am.’ ⁵‘Do not come any closer,’ God said. ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.’ ⁶Then he said, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.’ At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. ⁷The LORD said, ‘I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.’ ¹¹But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’ ¹²And God said, ‘I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.’ ¹³Moses said to God, ‘Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?’ ¹⁴God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.’ ¹⁵God also said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.”

.....John 10: 14 – 16, 27 – 28.....

“(Jesus said) ‘I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.’ ... ²⁷ ‘My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”

Today we are beginning a five-week series called ‘The Always God’, based on a book by the same name, written by Jarrett Stephens. In this study, we will be reminded that God hasn’t

forgotten you and me. In the past and in the present, God reaches out to those willing to hear and respond to His call.

Our world may have changed a lot since Moses' day, but we can be certain that God has not changed. When Moses asked God what His name was, God told Moses that He was, **'I AM WHO I AM.'** It is spelled **'YHWH'**. In English, we pronounce God's name, *'Yahweh.'*

God's name means that He has always existed. God is eternally self-sufficient to do what He wills, independent of anyone or anything. God is forever; always present, always knowing, always seeing; always in control. The remarkable thing about God is that He considers you and me important enough to reach out to speak to us in personal ways.

We learn in Genesis that God's voice is powerful. At His word, everything was created: stars, rivers, the galaxy; animals, plants, and men and women.

God *'spoke'* to Adam and Eve, and they with Him, as they enjoyed life in the Garden of Eden together. God *'spoke'* to Noah and told him to build an ark. God *'spoke'* to Abraham and told him to follow him to a new place where he would start a new nation. In today's Old Testament reading, God *'spoke'* to Moses from the Burning Bush.

Does God still speak to people today? If so, how do we hear Him? God may not speak to us *'face to face'* like He did to the people in the Old Testament, but God does still communicate with us every day in many ways.

The first three ways are GENERAL ways that God speaks to the world. They are ways that God shows the world proof that He does indeed exist.

First, God speaks to us through His **CREATION**. Psalm 19 says, ***'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day after day they pour forth speech, night after night they display knowledge.'*** (Psalm 19: 1 – 2) I imagine all of us have stood in awe of something in God's creation and it took our breath away. A glorious sunrise, a sunset; a mountain range, or the miracle of a newborn child. At that moment we know that only God could make something so remarkable.

Second, God speaks through our **CONSCIENCE**. While our consciences can be deceptive and lead us to do things that God does not want us to do, the Bible tells us that God has ***'put eternity into (our) hearts.'*** (Ecclesiastes 3:11) What this means is that God has given us a longing in our soul for eternal things that only God can fill. God also has given every human being the innate ability to know the difference between right and wrong and to know justice from injustice.

Paul talked about this in his letter to the Romans when he said, ***'For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, ... they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness...'*** (Romans 2: 14 – 15)

We can get into a lot of trouble *'following our heart,'* or doing something just because it *'feels right.'* If you believe God is speaking to you through your *'inner conscience,'* it is crucial to test it by Scripture. God will never lead you to do something which the Bible forbids.

Third, God speaks to us through our **CIRCUMSTANCES**. As with our consciences, it's easy to mis-interpret the events in our lives, so we need to try to understand what is happening from God's perspective and not jump to conclusions. For instance, you may get discouraged if something isn't turning out as you hoped, but God may be leading you to a new thing that will bless you in ways you have not imagined.

It is true, however, that God does use circumstances to get our attention. We can clearly see that our world today is full of signs that tell us we need God. Whenever we think that we humans are in charge of the world, God shows us how *not* in control we really are. The World-wide COVID pandemic is one of those things that shows us how vulnerable we really are.

When our bodies fail us, or when our relationships fall apart, God calls us to turn to Him. Even in what we call '*natural disasters*', like forest fires, earthquakes, floods, and even falling meteors like what evidentially happened near here last week, we can hear God saying, '*Nothing in this world will last forever. I AM the only thing that is eternal.*'

God also speaks in PARTICULAR ways to tell us things about Himself and about *Ourselves* that we cannot learn through His 'General Revelation'.

Through **CHRIST** we learn about God's plan to defeat sin and establish His reign upon a new earth. In Jesus, we are able to see God and hear God. As we heard in our gospel reading today, Jesus used the same name, '**I AM**' that God used when He spoke to Moses.

Jesus said, '**I AM the Good Shepherd.**' Jesus was saying that he too, is the same '**I AM**', as the Father; that he too is eternal, all-powerful, all-seeing, all-knowing. Jesus said, '**My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.**' (John 14:27)

Jesus also said, '**Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.... Everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.**' (John 14: 9; 15:15) Some of our Bibles have Jesus' words highlighted in red. When Jesus speaks, God speaks.

In the **CANON** of Scripture, God reveals His knowledge and truth. By CANON, we mean a '*standard*' or '*measuring stick.*' In the Bible, God has given us everything we need to know about Himself and He tells us how we can live with Him for all of Eternity.

When we read the Bible, God is able to speak to us. Scripture never gets '*old*,' because every time we read the Bible, even if we have read the same passage over and over again many, times, God always has something new to tell us through it.

Paul called the Bible, the '*Word of God*', because he said, it is '**God-breathed**'. Christians believe that God inspired the people who wrote the words in the Bible so that through it, we can be '**taught**', '**corrected**' and '**trained in righteousness.**' (2 Timothy 3:16) God uses Scripture to speak to us, in a way that is '**living and active**'. It has the ability, if we let it, to '**judge the thoughts and attitudes of (our) heart.**' (Hebrews 4:12)

We also hear God speaking through the **COUNSEL** of God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the gift that God sends to live in everyone who trusts in Jesus for their salvation. The Holy Spirit

is called our '**Counselor**' in the Bible. The Holy Spirit is how God teaches us and shapes us into His own image and makes us ready to live with Him in His Kingdom. (*John 14:23 – 26*)

God also speaks through the **CHURCH**. When God's Word is read and preached correctly, those present will be able to hear God's truth and believe in His Son Jesus and be saved to eternal life. Paul said, '**How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.... faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.**' (*Romans 10:15, 17*)

Church is where we meet together to hear the Word of God and to discern the voice of God together. Our church community is where God also speaks to us through the wise counsel of other believers.

Lastly, God promises that when we **CALL** to Him, He will answer us, telling us '**great and unsearchable things (we) do not know**'. (*Jeremiah 33:3*) The Bible speaks very clearly about certain things, like forgiving our enemies, and staying away from immorality, but there are certain '*grey areas*' that we need to ask God to tell us His specific will.

In order to hear God, we need to talk to God. Talking to God is a privilege that all Christians have. As our mediator, Jesus is the only one who can connect us to God. Because of that, we can approach God to have a conversation with Him at any time, in any place.

Back in 2004, a woman I knew told me that she heard God's voice as she drove to work. It didn't just happen once, either. She told me that every day, when she reached a certain part of town, she heard a voice in her head, which she was certain was from God. She was sure that God wanted her to stop at a particular house and go talk to the woman that she often saw sitting outside on the steps.

After many days of repeatedly arguing with God, the woman finally decided to do what God asked her to do. She felt really silly. What would the woman think when she knocked on the door? But she did it. She walked up all the steps leading up to the row house. When the woman answered the door, my friend told her that God sent her to ask if she needed any help.

The woman at the door began to cry. She said, '*I've been praying and praying to God, because my children and I have to sit **on the floor**, eat **on the floor**, and sleep **on the floor** because we have no chairs, no table and no beds*'.

My friend knew immediately why God had asked her to stop all those days and exactly how God wanted her to help this woman. My friend started a ministry that continues to thrive today called '**Off the Floor Pittsburgh**.' Volunteers distribute donated furniture to people who have none, many in the same neighborhood where my friend first heard God's voice.

When God spoke to Moses at the Burning Bush, He said, '**I have seen the misery of my people. I have heard them crying out, and I am concerned about their suffering.**' And then God said, '**I will rescue them.**' Our God still sees, and hears, and cares. Keep listening; God is still speaking. Amen.