

2024 Kickoff pt1- Listening

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2024 Kickoff / Psalm 1; 1 Kings 19:9–14

I want to ask you a question this morning, and ask you to be honest with yourself. What voice speaks loudest in your life?

Now be honest.

Here is a good way to evaluate the answer to that question. In the rare moments of silence that you get in your day, what messages keep replaying over and over in your head?

For a lot of us, it is not a great voice.

We hear a lot of messages in our day and time. We see or hear an average of about 98 ads a day. We receive an average of 52 text messages a day. An office worker gets around 121 emails a day. The average American watches 3 hours of TV a day. And the average person spends 6 hours a 41 minutes a day on the internet between phone and computer...of which 2 hours and 32 minutes of that time is on social media.

We get a LOT of messages.

We are listening to a lot of content. And like Elijah in the cave...a lot of it is meaningless noise.

(Read [1 Kings 19:9-14](#))

Elijah has people trying to kill him. He has people who he has led turning on him. And then he has an earthquake, a wind, and a fire that blow by his hiding place.

1, 2 Kings (8) God Reassures Elijah (19:9–18)

The first “word of the LORD” asks him why he is at Horeb. He replies that Israel is apostate, they kill the prophets, and he alone stands for covenant faith. Again, **he sees no real reason to continue**. Apparently he had hoped that the Mount Carmel episode would produce a final victory over Baalism

And God is not in any of it. – the loudest noises are NOT God’s voice, but He allows them to occur

Like a lot of the messages we get today Elijah’s world is filled with reasons to quit, cheat, lie, compromise, and be anything but faithful to God. And it would be really easy for any of us to start to listen to those voices...because they are so prevalent and SO loud.

1, 2 Kings (8) God Reassures Elijah (19:9–18)

Here, Elijah waits for God’s word through tearing wind, ground shaking earthquake, and roaring flame. The Lord does not speak, however, through these natural phenomena. Certainly Elijah has experienced God’s sovereignty over nature, and has benefited from miraculous fire, but **what he needs now is a definitive word from the Lord.**

But in my conversations with many believers those are the voices they want to stop. **I don’t think the majority of Christians want to listen to those voices.** In fact, I think most of us are pretty desperate to hear from God so we can listen to Him. We want to know what He wants from us.

1, 2 Kings (8) God Reassures Elijah (19:9–18)

the Lord may simply try to explain to Elijah that he works in small ways at this time. **God speaks in a quiet voice here to a prophet drained of strength**

So how do we set ourselves up to listen?

Turn to [Psalm 1](#) and let's camp out there for a bit.

So first let's look at verse 1- a person who is blessed "happy" is someone who is being intentional about what kinds of messages they are receiving.

3 specific messengers are identified as being intentionally frozen out- it also gives us a picture of the ways we go down this path...

- the wicked- accepting their advice
- sinners- being a participant in their ways
- scoffers- adopting their attitudes

Psalm 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary The Way of Life (1:1–3)

the three complete phrases show three aspects, indeed three degrees, of departure from God, by portraying conformity to this world at three different levels: accepting its advice, being party to its ways, and adopting the most fatal of its attitudes—for the scoffers, if not the most scandalous of sinners, are the farthest from repentance

How in the world do we AVOID all these people? Didn't we just spend most of a year talking about how we need to be missionaries and reach these people? How can we do that if we are never around them?

That's not what this verse is saying. It is saying, specifically, that we do not LISTEN to them. **We do not allow them to speak into our lives.** That can mean separation if their messages are too tempting for us, but it can simply mean we do not dwell on their thoughts or ideas as valid paths for our lives. **We are guarding our hearts to keep them from being led astray.- the ECHO chamber**

So where are we getting our messages from?

Verse 2- and that should not be a surprise. We are getting our messages from what God has told us to do.

Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary *The Way of Life* (1:1–3)

The law of the Lord stands opposed to ‘the counsel of the wicked’ (1), to which it is ultimately the only answer. The psalm is content to develop this one theme, implying that whatever really shapes a man’s thinking shapes his life

In order to listen to God, we have to be where He is speaking. Where is God speaking? So many places!

- In the Bible
- In music
- in teaching
- in the voices of other believers
- in nature
- in books and other written materials

It is quite possible to be hearing from God in so many places, IF we are not being overwhelmed by all these other voices.

Dallas Willard, in his book *Hearing God*, actually lays many of these out in what he calls his “Foundational Steps of Hearing God”

- Meditate constantly on God’s principles for life
- Pay close attention to what is happening in our life b/c God communicates to our minds and hearts
- Pray and speak to God constantly and specifically about all matters that concern us
- Listen carefully and deliberately for God, paying close attention to what we hear (*Hearing God*, Dallas Willard, p277-278)

And when we believe God is silent, take these follow up steps:

- Ask God if some hinderance is within you
- Take counsel from at least 2 people whose relationship with God you respect
- Correct any causes for why God's word could not come

(Ibid, 278)

What are the results of listening to God? (vs3)

We grow

We bear fruit

We are sustained

Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary **The Way of Life (1:1–3)**

The phrase its fruit in its season emphasizes both the distinctiveness and the quiet growth of the product; for **the tree is no mere channel, piping the water unchanged from one place to another, but a living organism which absorbs it, to produce in due course something new and delightful, proper to its kind and to its time.** The promised immunity of the leaf from withering is not independence of the rhythm of the seasons (cf. the preceding line, and see on 31:15), but **freedom from the crippling damage of drought** (cf. Jer. 17:8b).

And what happens to those who choose to listen to those other voices? (vs4-6)

They fail. Now they may seem to succeed in the short run, but their fall is coming. And those who listen to them will join in the fall.

Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary The Way of Doom (1:4, 5)

Therefore leads inexorably out of what these men have chosen to be (4). Before the Judge they will have, in our similar phrase, not a leg to stand on, and among his people no place. These two aspects of judgment, collapse and expulsion, are portrayed again with immense power in Isaiah 2:10–21.

But God knows the way He has planned for those who listen to Him (vs6a)

Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary The Parting of the Ways (1:6)

To ‘know’ is more than to be informed (as in 139:1–6): it includes to care about, as in 31:7 (Heb. 8), and to own or identify oneself with (cf. Prov. 3:6). To perish is used in many senses: here for instance of a road or course that comes to nothing or to ruin; elsewhere of hopes or plans frustrated (e.g. 112:10; Prov. 11:7), of creatures that get lost (119:176), and of men and achievements that come to grief (2:11; 9:6). The New Testament brings to light the eternal implications which are already contained in it (e.g. John 3:16).

So the two ways, and there is no third, part for ever

As the first week of 2024 ends...who are you listening to this year?

What voices need to be silenced? Amplified?

How will you listen to the Lord this year?

What will your tree look like on December 31st?