Series: Hearing God in 2016

Message # 3: When God Whispers

1/24/16

# Introduction

1. As I experienced the process of experiencing hearing loss and I was always tempted to fake that I heard something. I often feel the need to just pretend rather than admit I can’t hear or have to keep asking someone to repeat. And if somebody tried to whisper something, forget it, I can’t hear a thing unless your lips are touching my ears.
2. I think that’s how it is for many in the church, we feel tempted to fake it, to fake a spiritual walk that claims to be hearing from God or to not wanting to repeat the same requests to hear from God; easier to just try to fake it to everyone around you.
3. From my favorite author Frederick Buechner:

*“If we have never seen God, maybe we can say at least that we have heard him. Maybe "hearing" is a better metaphor than "seeing" and certainly a more biblical one because hearing takes place in time: we listen to one word following another in time, and it is in time, in the day-by-day events of our own times and of historic time, that God makes himself known to us if he makes himself known to us at all. And in this sense of "hearing," we can sometimes believe that we have heard him for ourselves. We have heard him in Scripture—in the passion of Jeremiah, the crying out of Job, the love of Christ. We have heard him in history. We have heard him in our own inner histories-—our own passion, our own crying out, our own love. And yet, to be honest, we must say also that there are times when we have not heard him any more than we have seen him. There are times when we have heard the Bible, the Gospels themselves, ring like a cracked bell. When we have heard truth itself go sour, banal, ambiguous, have listened to our own lives and heard mostly confusion and emptiness. Instead of hearing God, there have been times when we have heard only a Godforsaken silence. And for many of us these are the times that we know best.” (Secrets in the Dark, p.116)*

1. This morning as we continue our series of Hearing God in 2016. We will talk about hearing God in the most difficult circumstances; hearing God when we are in the valley of despair or a spiritual dry spell, and when we feel alone. How do we hear him when He whispers?
2. This can be even more difficult for those who have felt the presence of God in their life and have heard his voice before. Does God Leave us? Are we alone? Does God speak? How do we hear his Voice?

# [**Text: 1 Kings 19:1-15**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+king+19%3A1-18&version=NIV)

## The background of Ahab, Jezebel and Elijah (verses 1-2)

### Ahab

* King Ahab described in Chapter 18:30 *“did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any before Him”* and in 18:33 *“did more to provoke the Lord, The God of Israel, to anger than all the kings before”*

### Jezebel

* Jezebel was the power behind the throne. She brought Israel into the worship of Baal and killed the Lords Prophets
* Jezebel who vows to hunt down Elijah and kill him.

### Elijah, a prophet of the Lord

* Chapter 17:1 Elijah speaks to King Ahab the word of the Lord: “*As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.*” During this time of drought Elijah is fed by Ravens in the dessert.
* Chapter 17:19-24 The Lord uses Elijah to raise a widow’s boy from the dead.
* Chapter 18 – Elijah has a contest with the prophets of the false God, Baal.
* The 450 prophets of called to the false God Baal to burn the alter they had prepared. When nothing happened, Elijah’s Mocks these prophets of Baal, even asking if their God is asleep
* Elijah builds his alter to the true God, covers it with water and prays to God. God answers his prayer and consumes the alter with fire.
* Elijah then destroys the prophets of Baal.

## After all Elijah had done and seen when he hears of Jezebels plans and he runs! Why did Elijah run? (verses 3-9)

1. He was fearful of the future
2. He was tired, worn-out, exhausted with his life and his work
3. He was full of self-pity “*take my life, I am no better than my ancestors*” (vs 4)
4. He felt worthless
5. He felt alone, like the only one who was in this position
6. We see Elijah burned out and maybe even depressed

### Have you ever felt a desire to just run away from everything?

1. Maybe you have felt this way in the past, maybe you feel that way this morning.  Everything has just piled-up on you; you can’t take on more things
   1. Your marriage has not only lost that spark, it’s difficult to express love and compassion and at times, even maintain civility
   2. The job is monotonous and you feel there is more out there so you run
   3. You serve at the church but every week there is more to do, the pastor keeps pushing us, the music is the same, the and people aren’t as fun as you once thought they were so you run
   4. Maybe you have been serving God, maybe you have been praying for the restoration to happen, the healing to take place, for a family to begin, or for a family to be brought back together, maybe you have been faithful, but now you’re just tired. So you run
   5. But right now, you feel alone, and that God is way off.  You long to hear from, to feel his presence.
2. Now, maybe you’re not physically leaving a spouse, family, church, or job, but you’re checking out. You run- to the gym, you run to the Golf course, your bike, your games, your hobbies, or check out with extra-along work hours to avoid being around others – you’re running.
3. The idea of Elijah running just blows my mind.  God had just shown up and burned the alter in his contest with the prophets of Baal.  God had delivered those prophets into Elijah’s hands
4. Now…his life is threatened and he runs?  Not the reaction that I expected!
5. During these times of difficulty, it is often very easy to miss Gods voice, to not see his leading and to trust in his provision.  This is where this great man of God was at this time.

## In what ways did Elijah misunderstand Gods presence and how God speaks to us? (verses 10-18)

1. He fell into a trap of thinking God must not be present. If he was experiencing difficulty.
   1. Often we are eager to serve God when things are going great, but in times of hardship we stop serving, we stop listening, and we feel abandoned by God
      1. Just because we cannot hear the Lord, does not mean that he is not present.
   2. How can we overcome this?
      1. We need to reflect on what God has done in our lives in the past – Elijah had a lot of evidence that God was with him.
      2. We need to remember Gods promises:
         1. Psalm 46: 1-3 “*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging”*
         2. Hebrew 13:5 *“Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you*”
2. He failed to recognize how God has provided
   1. The Lord 2x had provided food and water for Elijah on his journey (VV 5-7) but Elijah still feels the same way in V 10 – alone and fearful
   2. Hearing from God often begins when we start reflecting on how God has provided for us in the little things.
3. He was accustomed to God speaking only in a loud and miraculous way
   1. He was provided food by a raven. He raised someone from the dead, He prayed for rain to start and stop and God responds. He saw his alter consumed with fire.
      1. Elijah had heard from God in the loud, miraculous, now God would speak to him in a gentle, still, whisper.
   2. Why was God not in the great wind, the earthquake, and the fire?
      1. Because Elijah would expect God to appear in those ways.
      2. What Elijah needs to learn was that God was always present was always speaking. God’s gentle whisper, was so great that Elijah had to cover his face.
      3. He is reassured that God is with him even in a gentle whisper. How about you?
   3. Do you only hear God in the Big stuff?
      1. If the sermon is powerful – is that the only time you hear God?
      2. If the praise band and worship was “great” is that the only time you God?
      3. Often we are working so hard at home; work and Church that we fail to hear the gentle whisper
   4. Many times, like Elijah, we are complaining and whining so much about our circumstances that we fail to hear God’s gentle whisper.
   5. God wants our attention.  God wants our faith.  Starting the stage on fire would get our attention, but would it really build our faith?
4. Elijah misunderstood Gods presence in speaking through community
   1. In verses 10 and 14 Elijah complains to God that he is the only one left
      1. I find it interesting that the Last words of God when he is speaking to Elijah is to remind him that he is not lone, 7,000 (v 18) other Israelites have not bowed done and remained faithful.
   2. Often we feel alone but we need to look up and see that there are many others that are standing with you.
      1. An alone Christian is an Oxymoron.
   3. God often speaks through Community, encourages through community, heals restores, restores and strengthens through Community.

## Application

1. Don’t let circumstances or feelings dictate your willingness to listen

2. Avoid depending on the “wow” effect in your corporate worship time

3. Rest.  Elijah was exhausted and burned-out; this hindered is ability to hear from God.

4. Expect to wait.  God often refines us during this waiting period.  Elijah waited 40 days.

5. Be reminded that God is your refuge and strength.

**Psalm 46: personalized**

*God is my refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, I will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most-High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The LORD Almighty is with me; the God of Jacob is my fortress. Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The LORD Almighty is with me; the God of Jacob is my fortress.” (NIV)*