

Number 7:89

God still speaks, listen for Jesus.

Numbers 7:1–5 “On the day when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle and had anointed and consecrated it with all its furnishings and had anointed and consecrated the altar with all its utensils, [2] the chiefs of Israel, heads of their fathers’ houses, who were the chiefs of the tribes, who were over those who were listed, approached [3] and brought their offerings before the LORD, six wagons and twelve oxen, a wagon for every two of the chiefs, and for each one an ox. They brought them before the tabernacle. [4] Then the LORD said to Moses, [5] “Accept these from them, that they may be used in the service of the tent of meeting, and give them to the Levites, to each man according to his service.” (ESV)

Imagine the scene. The Tabernacle has been constructed by God’s design. The dwelling place with his people is ready. But the cloud had filled the tent preventing entrance up until now. All of the tribes of Israel have brought offerings; for twelve days, one tribe a day, offered before the Lord. Equal sacrifice from each. All longing for His presence.

On this twelfth day... Moses, eager, cautious, hungry for an experience with God, went into the tent to speak with God.

What was the room like? A holy silence, calm, a sense of awe?

He heard a voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat of the ark of testimony. Between the Cherubim. Not seeing but hearing and this is enough. Moses as mediator. God to his people, His presence, felt, recognized, obeyed.

I read this... and I want this. I want to have a hunger for hearing God. Would love to sit here in the sanctuary and hear His voice just above the preaching table, near the cross! Audible, clear.

Reflecting on this I understand the impulse of some to want to revert to festivals, torah living... I think it is rooted in a desire for God. Who was so present, so clear in these OT accounts.

But Moses is no longer the mediator. We gather, still to hear God speak, but we do so listening for Christ.

Hebrews 8:5–6 “They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.” [6] But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.” (ESV)

1 Timothy 2:5–6 “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, [6] who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.” (ESV)

A better covenant, a better mediator (God himself), does not mean God stops speaking.

“People are meant to live in an ongoing conversation with God, speaking and being spoken to.” – Dallas Willard

What do we do with our hunger for this?

This morning I want to think through three key ways we hear God speak, and endeavor to listen to him. We need it now more than ever.

The Word, The Wind, With Others.

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The Word

What Moses is hearing and mediating is a revelation of God. His communication to his people. For Moses this is listening to the breath between the Cherubim... What a profound experience it must have been.

The thing is, we have this too, the same gift. His breath to us, the Bible.

2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (ESV)

God breathed. Old Testament and New. The Word. Spirit-guided, Spirit-maintained. A word that can be trusted.

Sean McDowell: “For many ancient books, there are often a few dozen existing manuscripts, and sometimes even a few hundred. Outside of the New Testament, more manuscript discoveries have been made of Homer’s Iliad than any other classical work. It is difficult to get an accurate number because there are constantly new discoveries, and many of the remains are fragmentary. Nevertheless, the total number is far less than 2,000 (the previous count was 643).” The Bible? Total Manuscripts: 23,986.(Copies of NT 99.5% accuracy compared with each other.)

So each time we open the word it is like entering the tabernacle, to hear the voice of God.

I wonder if we have lost some of the awe of that.

The wonder of flight. (Seth’s story)

Same with Scripture. It has become a task, something to check off. Or an expectation for Sundays. Familiar, but without the awe. Oh that the Lord would give us the wonder back.

Anchored in the Word. It is our source of hope, brings words of salvation, direction for life.

Psalms 119:105 “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (ESV)

Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (ESV)

“Every single one of us who is in Jesus, every single one of us who has a relationship with God. Through his word, and don’t underestimate this, when you open up the Bible, this is God speaking to you and me. God’s voice speaking to us by his Spirit, through his word. We are having a supernatural conversation with God when we open his word. Like, don’t cease to be astounded by that, don’t cease to be amazed by that, don’t become too casual with that reality...Be overwhelmed by the fact that God speaks to you and to me and that we get to hear him, like, let’s focus, keep our focus.” David Platt

Determine to be wise in the way we read and hear it...What we want to cling to from the Bible is its message on the whole and use it as a standard for interpreting the peripheral passages.

What we must hear as its message on the whole... is that of Jesus.

Jesus confronting those rejecting him... **John 5:39–40** “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, [40] yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. (ESV)

John 5:46–47 “For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. [47] But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?” (ESV)

Hebrews 1:1–2 “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” (ESV)

The word of Christ. His grace, righteousness, holiness, his promise to keep you, to sanctify you.

Andrew Wilson “we primarily hear the voice of God by encountering the person of Jesus. This helps us enormously, because it makes Jesus, rather than subjective thoughts or impressions we might have about whatever-it-is, the central reality when it comes to hearing from God.”

It won't always say things we fully agree with, that totally make sense to us now, but we submit to it because they are the very words of God for us.

He Gets Us - superbowl commercials, specifically one that declared, “Jesus loved the people you hate.” All sides up in arms hating on it. When Charlie Kirk and Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez can't stand it, must be right. But the thing is, Jesus said it! He literally said it!

The Word is also always speaking. When we go through what feel like dry seasons spiritually, don't feel connected to God, not “hearing” him - don't shy away from the word read or preached. He is speaking through it.

He speaks through his word.

In the Wind

God speaking in the wind represents the ongoing conversation we have with Jesus in prayer, as we cry out to him. And the point is that it is a conversation - not a one way speech, but asking, and listening. We have help here.

Jesus promised his followers a helper, a comforter, the Spirit of truth....

John 14:26–27 “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. [27] Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” (ESV)

Now, because we have Scripture, some might be inclined to say “we have enough” or that we have no need for the Spirit. Even some of us that believe the Spirit is still active today live as if he is not, left to be ignored until something dramatic happens.

But the Spirit is doing exactly what Jesus promised, teaching, reminding, spurring us on, giving peace. And we benefit from hearing God speak in the wind!

Of course this comes up against our posture toward the Spirit.

“Our failure to hear His voice when we want to is due to the fact that we do not in general want to hear it, that we want it only when we think we need it.” – Dallas Willard

If God speaks, we should be inclined to listen. So we ask for the Spirit to speak to us as we commune with God in prayer. But more than just asking, we need to listen.

Part of the problem is the frenetic pace we keep.

Also happens when we approach the word. We used to call a morning time of study and prayer a “quiet time.” I don’t know about you, when I open my Bible in the morning, I can’t always call it a quiet time. There are three kids needing to be fed and yelled at to get ready for school!

So we get quick with our reading so we can check the box that we did it! We miss quiet meditation on it. The same is true in prayer, and listening to the Spirit in our lives. There are moments when the Spirit will get your attention, but the daily spaces, do we have enough quiet to hear?

Sometimes God speaking is in the still small voice.

There is too much noise in our lives. This is a huge tool of the enemy to try to untether us from the voice of God. Distraction. Information. All of it steadily streaming before us where quiet is unknown.

To hear God in the Wind though, I think quiet is necessary. It is a huge discipline. To find disruptive peace. It will require shifting the schedule, looking out the window!

The practice of “Holy Leisure.” Sounds fun. But it is just sitting with God. Pushing thoughts, distractions out. Stacy’s retreat, feeling “bored.” Those just might be the spaces God speaks.

Psalm 62:5-7 “For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
for my hope is from him.

[6] He only is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

[7] On God rests my salvation and my glory;
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.”

Might include putting down markers. A spiritual mentor lights a candle to be reminded of God’s presence. I asked the Lord for something similar and we agreed that any time I heard a bird sing I would be reminded of his presence. “Consider the birds...”

It wouldn’t work if there was no time for it. “How can we be led to still waters if we are in a constant state of motion?”

Hearing gives us a sense of peace, clarity, restoring. Drawing us to Christ.

This week I was in the office studying our text, and found myself praying for revival, the likes of which we are seeing at Asbury College. Even in those moments of prayer I felt the presence of God, the sweetness of the Spirit. The wind blowing.

He speaks in prayer, where we speak and listen. And when we hear, we use Scripture as the guardrails as the Spirit will not speak contradictory to the Word.

Like Bereans. **Acts 17:11** “Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. (ESV)

The Spirit won't tell you to rob a bank, to cheat on your wife, to lie. But the Spirit will draw you further in reliance on Christ.

The smell test!

1 John 4:2–3 “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3] and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God....” (ESV)

Make space to listen to the wind. Your lives are full, the calendar is crazy, but this is the God of the universe, give him space.

You are now the dwelling place of God. How much would change if we start our days asking the Spirit to speak?

With Others

When Moses heard God speak it was for the community. Now when He speaks it is often in community.

Andrew Wilson - “the New Testament paints a picture of a community where people not only heard from God through Scripture, prayer, and the sacraments, but also through prophecy, other languages, words of wisdom and knowledge, and so on. Sometimes people were worshiping and fasting, and “the Holy Spirit said” something; Hearing from God about things (in community), even when major decisions (or people's lives) are in the balance, is quite ordinary.”

We hear God speak in his word, we hear the Spirit speak in the wind, we also hear him speak in and through each other, why we need one another.

We live in an era of self-centeredness. The world says that self is the highest good, each one has “their truth.” But real life is not found merely in self, it is found in belonging to Christ and others.

Even when we feel super spiritual, we need each other.

We listen with and for others.

We are meant to have a community that helps us check the word together. To discern what we are hearing, if it is of Christ or something else. Up close, personal. Community that has authority with it. Elders who will give an account for their care and shepherding, stewarding the ways the church listens.

Community that keeps us accountable to act on what the Lord has said.

Thinking of Acts 2, as they waited on the Spirit together, when he came they moved out as witnesses.

Get these people.

God still speaks, listen for Jesus.

Here with Moses in the tabernacle God's voice comes "from above the mercy seat."

It is by the mercy of Christ we can live. Because God came himself, lived a perfectly obedient life for us and gave all of himself for us on the cross to cover our rejection of his way, to give us his righteousness. When we believe in him, we hear him speak.

He still speaks with mercy today. Announcing the goodness of his grace. Leading us onward as citizens of the Kingdom. His kindness leading us to repentance and real life.

Will you listen?

God still speaks, Jesus speaks in the Word, in the Wind, and with others.

May we have ears to hear.