

Do you hear them? Do you hear those voices in your head? You know; the voices that tell you to go ahead and do it, you've worked hard, you've earned it. Or the voices that say don't do that, you're headed for trouble. We all at one time or another hear those voices that sometimes send conflicting messages, almost bombarding our head to the point where we want to scream. So, when life gets overwhelming and the voices in your head begin to drown out your own thoughts where do you go?

In another reminder that the people in the Bible are just like us, there is a story from the Old Testament about a prophet of God named Elijah who was overwhelmed with life.

Now Elijah should be on top of the world. He just witnessed a great victory in his life that proved the power of the living God of Israel to be greater than the lifeless idol called Baal. But the victory is short-lived because Queen Jezebel, a worshipper of Baal, has promised to end Elijah's life.

Hearing the wicked voice of Jezebel silenced the victory shouts that should have still been reverberating in Elijah's head. That lone voice causes Elijah flee to the desert and specifically to Mt Sinai, the same mountain upon which God had spoken to Moses. While Elijah was on the mountain feeling overwhelmed God came to him. We pick up the story in 1 Kings 19:

*1 Kings 19:11-12 The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."*

*Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.*

In each and every one of our lives the voices that come to us are much like the wind, the earthquake and the fire. They are the voices that shout at us; the voices that demand our attention. And it is easy to get caught up in the relentless cacophony of the voices all around us. The problem with that is that we often mistake these voices for the voice of God.

Elijah's mountaintop experience reveals to us an important lesson in this series. God's voice is often not the loudest voice; but when we learn to discern God's voice and silence the other voices we'll be able to hear God speak in the still small voice. Our problem is that we don't know how to shut out the other voices so that we can hear from God.

Maybe we would be able to hear the voice of God if we, like Elijah, could just find a mountain... but where do we find a mountaintop in our daily lives where we can hear the voice of God? Few of us could run away from it all for 40 days like

Elijah did! But what if the mountaintop that you and I need is just a place of silence; a moment in each day where we can learn to discern the voices and most importantly hear the voice of God?

Nooma video [Images scroll silently on screen about silence]

There were three questions that were posed in that video clip. I'd like you to talk about each one and report back some answers. Here are the questions:

Q1. Why is it easier to surround myself with noise and keep moving than to stop, be silent and listen?

Q2. Does my schedule, my time, my life look like that of a person who wants to hear God's voice?

Q3. Do you really believe that God's voice is more interesting than the voices around you?

While you're finishing up that third question; let me share with you the words of Paul to Timothy written in 1 Timothy 4:3-4:

*For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

We live in a time when people have itchy ears. We much prefer the voices of myth makers that tell us what we want to hear than to the words of Jesus that may challenge those of us who call ourselves his disciples.

Think about it? Jesus told us to love our enemies; how well are we doing that?

Elijah the prophet of God had a similar problem in Israel. The people followed Baal because they had itchy ears. They found the free-willing style of Baal's voice preferable to the word of God.

But as God proved through Elijah while there may be many voices out there; there is only one who is capable of speaking life-giving words, and that is the One True God who is alive!

In addition to Elijah, there was another prophet of God who set out to discern the difference between the lifeless voices of this world and the voice of God. Listen to the words of the prophet Habakkuk:

<sup>18</sup> "Of what value is an idol, since a man has carved it?  
Or an image that teaches lies?

For he who makes it trusts in his own creation;  
he makes idols that cannot speak.

<sup>19</sup> Woe to him who says to wood, 'Come to life!'  
Or to lifeless stone, 'Wake up!'

Can it give guidance?  
It is covered with gold and silver;  
there is no breath in it.

We've spent a lot of time listening to lifeless voices from the idols we've created in this world. Then Habakkuk offers this statement:

<sup>20</sup> But the LORD is in his holy temple;  
let all the earth be silent before him."

Elijah of all people should have known that God's voice is greater than the lifeless voices our culture creates.

But Elijah was a lot like us. He let too many of the voices get inside his head. And all those competing voices left his head ringing with the sounds of too many competing voices. So when he found himself on the mountain of God Elijah was finally able to silence the other voices and hear the voice of God.

I want to challenge you as this series continues in the upcoming weeks to find a place of solitude where you can take advantage of some times of silence when you can shut out the lifeless voices and hear the living voice of God in your life.