

Small Groups @ TBC Sermon Discussion Notes

Date of Sermon: 17th January 2016

Speaker: Paul Ferguson

Title: The Voice. Still and Small

Introduction: The aim of this talk was to introduce the idea that God speaks to us in our inner-being (soul, heart) and that this is a normal Christian experience. Furthermore God speaks to us as individuals - whispering into our hearts with thoughts, impressions & many other way too - which are profoundly personally to us.

Review: (invite one or more who have heard the talk to give their own brief review)

Read: 1 Kings 19:9 - 13

Reflect:

Elijah had experienced the work and word of God in very dramatic ways during his ministry none more so than during his conflict with the prophets of baal (1 Kings 18:16-45). Paul's talk began by asking the question, **why did God speak to Elijah like this?** Why didn't he speak in a big booming God-like voice as he had before?

Some suggestions were offered as a means of tackling this question.

- i. God whispered to Elijah as a signal to his nearness. Remember Elijah was on the run, hiding in a cave, frightened of Jezebel - running away from his calling even. God's way of speaking to him (still small voice) seems to emphasise the importance, in God's mind of Elijah as a person over Elijah the prophet - discuss. God wants to communicate to us as individuals, quietly in our hearts, in ways we can understand. Read 1 Cor 2: 11 - 16. How does this intimate way of God communicating feel to you?
- ii. God's still small voice is reflective of his character and of Jesus and his dealings with people. Reflect on Isaiah 40: 13. Can you remember occasions when Jesus spoke gently to people he was ministering to?
- iii. God speaks to us in a still small voice because he values our free will and wants us to respond to him out of love. Elijah had **chosen** to run away but God called him back and recommissioned him. God loves us, respects us and has given us free agency so that we can love and serve him. "His still small voice calls us into participation with his purposes as friends and collaborators."¹ How does the idea of being "friends and

¹ Dallas Willard

collaborators” with God make you feel and think? What are the possible implications if we take this on board?

- iv. Remember that Elijah was just a human like us (James 5: 17). Why is it that we find it hard to relate to these big biblical figures and their experiences?

Paul spoke about some of the things which can hinder our listening to and connection with God’s still, small voice.

- i. Lack of training. How can we develop listen hearts?
- ii. Noise. Noise within, stress, worry and anxiety. Noise without, we live in a frenetic, demanding and noisy world. How can we find the quiet and develop the space needed to hear God’s still small voice?
- iii. Lack of desire. Sometimes we just don’t want to go there! Could it be that our misapprehensions about God and ourselves hinder wanting to hear God? Talk as a group about how this can be and what can be done to work it out?

Respond:

Love for God

How do you think Elijah’s feelings and therefore response to God would have varied from what it was if God’s word had come in the wind, earthquake & fire?

Love for one another

Quiet speak is associated with the language of love and grace. How do you think the way God spoke to Elijah could challenge the way we speak to others and why?

Love for neighbour & world

What might God be whispering into your heart regarding your neighbours/friends/colleagues? How might listening to God affect our treatment of those around us on our frontline?

And finally:

Before you conclude, ask each person:

- What is the main thing you are taking away as an action point?
- How can we pray for you?
- Is there anything we can check on next time we meet?

Leaders: feel free to be selective and creative with your use of these notes. Don’t feel you have to use all of the material, but do try to keep the shape of Review - Read - Reflect - Respond