

The Still, Small Voice Of God

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I have always been fascinated by the story told in 1 Kings 19. It presents Elijah. Elijah was the great and powerful prophet whose sharing in the Spirit of God caused a drought and a rainstorm. Elijah called fire down on Mount Carmel, and defeated the false prophets of Baal. Elijah left the earth in the fiery chariot of God causing people to wonder if he would come again, or, centuries later, if he had come again in a man named John the Baptist, or another who was infinitely more powerful than John, Jesus Christ. In this reading, Elijah is told to go to the mountain of God, Horeb, and experience the Presence of God. This was the same mountain that Moses went to when he received the Covenant of the Law of God. Elijah went up Horeb and hid in a cave. And he did experience God's presence, only not in various displays of awesome power, but in a tiny whispering sound. The reading ends with Elijah standing at the entrance of the cave. "Why are you here, Elijah?" the still small voice asks. "I have been zealous for the Lord, but the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, torn down the altars of the Lord, and put all of his prophets to death except me," Elijah responds. The still small voice, now identified as the voice of the Lord, gives Elijah instructions on how he will renew the covenant of God with the people.

So here we have the covenant being renewed on the same mountain that Moses received the covenant. Many years later Elijah and Moses would appear together on another mountain, Mount Tabor, the Mountain of the Transfiguration of the Lord, and they would discuss with Jesus the new covenant that the Father would make with mankind through the Body and Blood of the Lord.

What fascinates me so much about this reading is that Elijah is given a great commission after listening to a tiny whispering sound that was God's voice. It leads me to reflect on the ways that God speaks to us, as His People and as individuals.

Many times people will wonder why they do not have the experience of God's Presence that others seem to have. They may be on a retreat, at a prayer conference, before the Blessed Sacrament, or whatever, and see how others are visibly moved by the Presence of God, while they feel nothing. Then they wonder if God is rejecting them. Perhaps we have all felt that way at times. Those are the times that we need to listen to the Lord in the quiet, not seek Him in the thunder.

I am certain that God speaks to each of us in many different ways. There are times that we might just be at peace while others are on fire. There are times that we may be on fire while others are just at peace. There are times when we may be fighting off distractions while those around us are in deep communication with God. Even when we have distractions God is speaking to us, for we want to focus on God, therefore we are receiving His Grace. God speaks to us in many wonderful ways.

Sometimes God speaks to us in the decision we make to turn away from a course of action or even a lifestyle that will ultimately destroy us. The closer we come to God, the deeper we realize the intensity of our sins, even sins from many years ago that have been forgiven through penance. We need to ask ourselves, "How did I come to the decision to turn away from a destructive direction?" Then we realize that we experienced God in a way we never expected. God writes straight with the crooked lines of our lives. He turns our sinful behavior into an occasion for drawing closer to Him through our determination to change our life. So Mary Magdalene, a sinner, caught in adultery, responded to Christ's forgiveness by becoming one of His most faithful disciples. She earned the honor of being the first to experience the Resurrected Lord. Would she have had that honor if she had not sinned and been forgiven? We will never know. But we do know that God turned her sinful state into a determination to come closer to Him than she could have ever imagined.

The still, small voice of God does the same for all of us. How many men and women walk away from an inappropriate and even sinful relationship and walk into a determination to draw closer to God? How many married people are called to strengthen their marriage after they realize how close they have come to destroying it? How many young people have made the determination to serve Christ after they saw what they become when they just go along with the crowd? How many college people and even high school people have said to

me and other priests, “I don’t like the person I am becoming. I like who I was before the drinking, the parties and the sex.” That also is the still small voice of God calling us out of the cave and commissioning us to work his wonders in the world.

Look at our lives. Perhaps you join me in realizing that despite the difficulties of life, we are immersed in a bed of roses. And yes, the roses have thorns that scratch us, but they are so beautiful and their fragrance is so overwhelming, that we hardly notice the cost of lying in the rose bed. Isn’t that what happens in a good marriage, in a Catholic family, and in the lives of all committed to the Lord? The recognition of the beauty and wonder of Jesus Christ in our lives is also the still small voice of God.

Many years ago an famous singer named Perry Como had an original hit based on this reading from 1 Kings. It was called The Still Small Voice. Listen to the lyrics:

A still small voice will speak to you one day
A still small voice will call to you and say
“I am the earth, the sky, the brightest star on high
The tallest tree, the smallest drop of dew”
A still small voice will one day say to you.

The still small voice from every voice apart
Will whisper in the language of your heart
“I am the night, the day, the blessing and the way
The dream that keeps a lonely heart aglow.”

Once you have the word a still small voice will say
Your heart will answer, “Yes, I know.”
Once you have the word a still small voice will say
Your heart will answer, “Yes, I know.”

Elijah heard the voice. And he heard the commission. The covenant with Moses had to be renewed.

Listen. Listen to the voice. To you and to me the voice of the Lord is saying: “Glorify Jesus Christ with your lives.”