

“Prayer is Listening Too!”

by Pastor Steve Ramer

July 27, 2014

FCMF # 2

Scripture

Psalms 29

Psalms 29:1 Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. 2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendor. 3 The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters. 4 The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. 5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. 6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. 7 The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. 8 The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. 9 The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, "Glory!" 10 The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever. 11 May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!

Luke 6: 46-49

Luke 6:46 "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you? 47 I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. 48 That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house."

Sermon

In the beginning darkness ruled as “a formless void.”

Before there was anything there was only God.

And then, according to Genesis, God spoke

speaking into that formless night,

“Let there be light!” and there was light.

And then God said, “Let the waters be gathered...

and let dry land appear!” And it was so.

And then God said, “Let the earth

bring forth living creatures of every kind...” And that too was so.

Only God, then, is primordial,

and God’s first act in creation was to speak.

It was this sound, the voice of God, that filled the dark void!

And with that voice the heavens and the earth fell into place.
God's spoken word is powerful, creative and eternal.
God is the original speaker - everything else
in heaven and on the earth, then, awaits that voice.
And God still speaks and all creation, can only listen
an all mortal flesh is best then to keep silent.

Prayer then must also be about listening.
And since God spoke first into the silence,
then maybe our prayers should begin with listening.
Prayer should start with first listening for God's voice,
listening for what God has to say to us.
But of course I must admit to you
that most of my prayers do not start out that way.
No matter my level of sincerity or necessity ,
most of my prayers start with me doing all of the talking.
Like one of the fools referred to in the Proverbs
I babble on telling God what I want
or about the needs of others long before I stop to listen.
Sometimes I may not even take the time to listen at all.
Other times, similar to the fool in Jesus' story this morning,
I only act like I'm listening and then fail to act on God's words.
So why do I so often get it backwards?
Well maybe its my own fault!
Maybe I, maybe you to, have let our prayers be co-opted
by our culture of "being busy and getting things" done.
But since prayer is so important maybe we should
start our prayers by taking our time and to pray slowly.

James instructs us in his epistle,
"to be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."
"Pray slow!" could also be a nice summation.
Eugene Petersen says this about prayer;
(selected, pp. 43-44) "Prayer is a daring venture... Be slow to pray."

My guess is that most of us have tried this,
we have tried to sit quietly in meditation
waiting for God to speak, listening for that "still small voice."
Maybe at times it works and it actually seems easy
while at other times it is really hard work.
But like most skills it takes practice to get better.
Listening, wether its to my spouse, or children, or even a congregant,
or to God, for that matter, takes practice to get better at it.

And we all know that we can always get better at listening.
The Divine all powerful creator is calling to us,
and communicating to us in every moment of our lives.
God is always communicating in some form or another,
in the silence as well as through all the noise of our busyness.

And God is addressing our deepest and most pressing needs
as well as listening, listening to the deepest groans of our soul!
So listen, listen... God is calling!
Listen, because listening is a Holy act, it is a sacred calling?
Listen, listen as you rush off to work and even on your days off.
Listen, listen to your kids, your spouse
and even to those to interrupt your day with demands
for God maybe speaking to you through them.
Listen to the birds, the trees and the sky.
and above all listen, listen to your own soul!
And listen, deeply, hear the creating, loving
and sustaining word that God is speaking to you!
Take the time, take time, to slow down,
slow your speech, slow your mind and just listen.

Remember that God does not slumber, nor does God get weary
of us and need to take a break to get away from us.
God is the "great multitasker," able to simultaneously
speak to us as well as to listen fully to us.

God also knows already what we really need.
God knows that we are stressed, or anxious or tired
and God has already provided the solutions
to our most pressing problems.
We just do not know it yet because we likely haven't stop talking -
what we need to do is listen, to pray slow.

I know there have been times where I have felt overwhelmed
by stress, or by pain or things that I cannot handle.
The best thing I can do in those times is to just stop.

Rather than plunge into fixing them I first need to just stop.
 Stop talking, stop thinking and stop worrying.
Just stop to be quiet,
 and try to sit quietly in the lap of a loving creator.
And I have found, in that place of love and safety,
 I am much better able to truly hear.
That my friends is power,
 that my brothers and sisters is perfect peace!

God is listening and speaking to us
 listening and speaking deeply to our souls!
That is the basis of the most firm of foundations!
 And if that is so, what more needs to be said?!