

Listen

Hearing That Still, Small Voice
and Finding Your Own



***“Look, I’ll pour out my spirit on you. I’ll reveal my words to you.”
— Wisdom (from Proverbs)***

Have you ever misplaced your phone—which is on vibrate of course—and then asked someone to call it? We get really still and really quiet. Our ears perk up in all directions in order to be ready to hear that little buzz. It is a quieting down and high alert all at the same time. This Lent we will quiet things down and heighten our attention to the “still, small voice” of God and our own True Self. Listening through prayer as well as meditation on holy texts is an ancient Lenten practice. Come and rest, come and listen.

Ash Wednesday | Finding Your Life: Listening Deeply

“...repent and believe in the Good News.” — Mark 1:9-15

As we prepare for our 40-day journey of Lent, we “turn around” (the root meaning of the word “repent”) from the distractions of daily noise and focus our attention on listening in a deeper way. Writer Parker Palmer suggests we must listen “to what our *life* is telling us”— in other words, to listen to the deep wisdom God gave to us as a birthright, connecting to God’s purpose once again.

Lent One | Finding Your Cave: Listening Spaces

...he went into a cave and spent the night... The Lord said, "Go out and stand at the mountain before the Lord. The Lord is passing by." A very strong wind tore through the mountains and broke apart the stones before the Lord. But the Lord wasn't in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake. But the Lord wasn't in the earthquake. After the earthquake, there was a fire. But the Lord wasn't in the fire. After the fire, there was a sound. Thin. Quiet. . . . — 1 Kings 19:11-12

Sometimes we just need to get away in order to hear from that "still small voice" within. This quiet voice is an attribute of the Holy Living God, as Elijah found out in a cave where he expected to experience God in a big wind and earthquake and fire. What is your "cave" equivalent? What place (a park, a path, a rocking chair, a shoreline) and practice (walking, journaling, reading, making art) helps you get quiet enough for long enough so you can hear past the chaos and into the depths of your life?

Lent Two | Finding Your Breath: Listening to Our Bodies

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. — Romans 8:26-30, 38-39

Our sacred texts connect the breath of God with our own aliveness—God blew breath into us at creation and we continue to breathe all of creation in and out of our bodies constantly. The early church also believed that breath and Spirit were one and the same. How might the meditative practice of paying attention to our breath be, in and of itself, a prayer of connection to God? When we embrace our bodies as the holy vessel of God, we become even more our True Selves—which has been there all along.

Lent Three | Finding a Word: Listening to the Texts

Wisdom shouts in the street; in the public square she raises her voice. Above the noisy crowd, she calls out. At the entrances of the city gates, she has her say: "How long will you clueless people love your naïveté, mockers hold their mocking dear, and fools hate knowledge? You should respond when I correct you. Look, I'll pour out my spirit on you. I'll reveal my words to you." — Proverbs 1:20-23

The Wisdom tradition within Christianity invites us to love knowledge, especially the self-knowledge that comes from examining ourselves in relationship to the liberating Word of God. *Lectio divina* (“*divine reading*”) is an ancient tradition of mixing the reading of scripture with prayer and meditation. Rather than an analytical approach to the words of scripture, it is a way for the words to simply be present and live in us. What will we hear when we let go of what it all is “supposed to” mean and simply let it reside within us?

Lent Four | Finding Your Power: Listening for Healing

Because she had heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his clothes. She was thinking, ‘If I can just touch his clothes, I’ll be healed.’ — Mark 5:24-34

Prayer as a spiritual practice may come easily for you and maybe it doesn’t. Even the most devout among us has doubts about prayer’s power at times. What is it? How does it work? This week we will consider that the mechanics of *what* happens in prayer is not as important as *that* we do it. Because whether or not the outcome for ourselves or others is an actual healing, the very act of being entangled with God and with others through prayer has healing and power-bestowing benefits.

Lent Five | Finding Your Mystic: Listening Beyond the Voices

Don’t be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is — what is good and pleasing and mature. Because of the grace that God gave me, I can say to each one of you: don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought to think... Be happy in your hope, stand your ground when you’re in trouble, and devote yourselves to prayer. — Romans 12:2-12

We often have a “cast of characters” living inside our heads that love to carry on endless conversations — each from their own perspective. The chatter of our minds can sometimes keep us from a deeper listening and it is often difficult to decipher exactly what constitutes a mystical connection to God. Getting our True Self into the chairperson’s set in the committee meeting does not mean ignoring those voices of pessimism, people-pleasing, or accusation, but instead listening intently to them and not

letting them bully us into action based on fear. Letting them in and letting them go is the prayer of the mystic within.

Palm Sunday | Finding Your Purpose: Listening to Your Heart

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane... And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." — Matthew 26:36-46

Jesus' prayer life was described most often in the scriptures as something he did "away" from the crowds or disciples. And as we come to the last week of this Lent journey, we have experienced the blessings of turning away from the noise of the world in order to turn inward to hear that "still small voice" of God and finding our own voice of wisdom there as well. This Sunday begins the story of the end of Jesus' human life and the scripture contains one of the rare examples of how Jesus prayed. It was honest, it was gut-wrenching, and it finally was a letting-go of expectations about life and a turn toward the acceptance that gives the courage to move onward.

Holy Week | Hearing the Still, Small Voice: Finding Your Own

"I have revealed your name to the people you gave me from this world. They were yours and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. This is because I gave them the words that you gave me, and they received them. They truly understood that I came from you, and they believe that you sent me. I'm praying for them..." — John 17-19

The "Appointment with God" that we have experienced each week in our Lent worship will be expanded for an evening of being with God, with ourselves, and with each other. We start with a meal, remembering the last time Jesus ate with his disciples. Then we will "go to the Garden" with Jesus to pray, hear music, be silent together, and see photos from our individual Lent prayer journeys. We will hear the scripture account of Good Friday and then go out into the night to wait for...the rest of the Story.