

The Word Became Flesh (Advent Series)

I. The God Who Still Speaks

11/30/2008

1. We know that God has spoken to his people through the Bible, which we call God's Word. Within the Bible are described many ways in which God speaks. How many can you name?

There are a large number of possible responses to this question. Some examples are:

In a still small voice (to Elijah – 1 Kings 19:11-13)

In an audible voice (Mark 1:11, 1 Sam 3)

Through dreams (Joseph, son of Jacob; Joseph, Jesus' earthly dad)

Through prophets (Ezekiel)

Through angels (Gabriel)

Through Animals (Balaam)

By Creation (Gen. 1, John 1, Psalm 19:1-4)

Through signs (burning bush, fire, plagues)

Through Christ (Hebrews 1:1)

Through the Holy Spirit (John 15:26-27)

Through others within the church

2. If God speaks to us in so many ways, why is it that we so rarely hear him?

- We are too busy to listen
- We are listening on a "different frequency" than God is talking (we aren't really tuned in to God)
- We really don't want to hear God. He might tell us something we don't want to hear.
- We hear Him, but we don't recognize him (He's not in the wind, earthquake, or fire – but He's the still, small voice).
- Satan may be jamming the signal (distracting us)

3. What are some specific things that hinder us from hearing God?

Neglecting our daily walk with God

Inability to recognize His voice, because we aren't used to hearing it/not tuned in

The clamor of other noises in our heads

We mistake someone else's voice for that of God

4. How did Pastor Steve describe God's words?

God's words (and thoughts and actions) are all consistent. There are few words, but they are precise and powerful. The Word of God is not like a sermon, which is external, but something that comes from inside of us. When He says something, it's already happening.

5. While God's word has great value, Pastor Steve suggested that man's word has decreased in value. Why is that, and what is the impact?

We have become saturated in words coming at us from every direction by electronic, written, and verbal mediums. Thus, if we can't see it, we don't believe it. Words no longer carry any credibility.

6. The Israelites had experienced the physical presence of God on Mt. Sinai and as they wandered through the desert. In Isaiah 64:1-9, we hear a plea for God to come down again. What is requested of God?

Show tenderness and help the Israelites.

Cause the other nations to quake (show them who is boss)

7. How did God eventually respond to this request, and why might that cause some problems?

He sent a baby in a manger. This was in no way what the Jews wanted nor expected. They had seen the mighty miracles in Egypt and as they journeyed toward and moved into the Promised Land. They wanted a Messiah who would do the same kinds of things. They had no use for a baby.

8. Pastor Steve listed three questions we always are asking. These were:

- What does God want; what are His expectations? (Is He angry at me?)
- What should I do? (What is God's will for me? What should I do with my life?)
- What is going to happen? (How is the world going to end?)

9. But God has a different priority. Before dealing with those questions, he wants to deliver a different message. What is that?

God will never tell us what He wants until He tells us who He is. That's because, once He tells us who He is, then we will know what He wants. He will reveal to us who we are and what to seek. Thus, our first priority must always be developing our relationship with God.

Secondly, instead of worrying about who I am and what shall I seek, we should look to the scriptures to tell us how to live right now, regardless of where it takes us.

10. When we have a major crisis, whether as an individual or as a society, such that we know we need God, then we listen better. Why is that?

The crisis gets our attention and focus. All the distractions are put aside in order to concentrate our energies on dealing with the crisis. We know we need help and often realize that only God can provide that help. Thus, it is "worth it" to take the time to reconnect with God.

11. How do we listen for God outside of a crisis situation?

Discipline ourselves to stay tuned into God, using prayer and scriptures to help maintain our focus. Make sure we set aside some quiet time away from the worldly demands on our time, our senses, and our energy. “Think advent”: “Lord speak to me”. Listen for God’s voice, knowing you will recognize it if you have prepared your heart and mind to hear it.