

“BREAKING THE SILENCE” – Luke 1:5-25

There are moments when we all like quiet and there are moments we all like a joyous crowd.

*Depending on who you are – you may like quiet more (to one of my boys when they were younger “time out” was like water boarding, to the other it was play time) or you may like the crowd more (you like group projects, it is doesn’t get fun until there are double digit people at your meal, and you love the crowd at a game or when your shopping almost as much as the game or the store). We all have moments when both the crowd and the quiet are good for our soul. **But silence – extended, long extended periods or seasons of silence can be tough on any soul – even those who like their quiet.** It’s one thing to like your alone time - it’s another to have no one to have a conversation with. It’s one thing to enjoy a little quiet time over a meal or movie - it’s another to get the silent treatment from the one you love. It’s one thing to be quiet with God - it’s another to sit in silence – wondering if you will ever hear or believe that God is again. Silence – true extended silence from the one we want to hear from - is hard. Silence from God – is painful. We feel alone, abandoned – orphaned. **QUESTION...***

Does God go silent on us - on you?

For some – there was a silent scream deep in your soul that almost came out of your mouth – and that scream said yes. I feel like God has gone silent on me. Maybe you would say – I’m not sure if I have ever heard God in any form or fashion. If I was a writing a mystery thriller I would withhold the answer to this question – “Does God go silent?” to end to hold you hostage to the moment – but I’m not. This is not a mystery or a simple moment of pleasure – I believe this is significant life changing question God wants you to know every minute of your life and the longer we can talk about it – the better. So here is your answer ...

God is never silent.

There are seasons when God’s voice seems quiet, even painfully quiet, but He is never silent. God is always speaking.

*As we begin Advent today – as we celebrate that God came to us – hear this truth – **God is never silent.** And, as we look forward in Advent to His coming again – realize, there will be seasons when God seems quiet – even painfully quiet – but **HE IS NEVER SILENT!***

**If God is never silent – the question becomes – How do we hear him? And ...
What keeps us from hearing Him?**

Last Sunday, we finished our look through Malachi the last book of the first section of God’s Word called the Old Testament – or Old Covenant. It happens to contain the last new words God spoke to His people Israel before Jesus came and brought the New Covenant or New Testament. *Here in Luke 1:5, we will see God speak his first new words to His people in almost 400 years. In this passage – God is going to speak to us – and I don’t use that phrase lightly – God is going to speak to us about silence and quiet. Let’s go ...*

Silence or quiet - in this passage:

Luke 1:5-13 (ESV) 5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. 7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. 8 Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, 9 according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. *(once a lifetime deal to enter the outer courts of the holy place)* 10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. 11 And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. 13 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.”

01. Elizabeth and Zechariah *(vs 13)*

Elizabeth and Zechariah had prayed for a child for many years – with seemingly no answer.

- How did they walk blameless before the Lord in the midst of this painfully quiet time?

Elizabeth and Zechariah believed God’s written word was God’s living word – still

speaking. God was not silent to Elizabeth and Zechariah. 5- Zechariah – the Lord remembers *This is the only way they could be considered righteous (right) before God. They believed the law revealed God's holy way and character and it revealed their need for a Savior as it promised. So they obediently brought sacrifices to atone for their sin – knowing that doves and lambs would never make them right before God. But they believed that these sacrifices pointed to a sacrifice to come (Jesus) that would make them right or righteous before God.*

Even in painfully quiet seasons, God comforts our soul when we believe His word. God is never silent!

It was quiet for these two – but it was not silent because they believed God's word was alive and speaking every minute of every day they engaged it.

What do you believe about God's Word – his words to you. And not what do you believe in your mind to be true. I mean what do you functionally believe?

* Is this (BIBLE) the living words of God to you and I?

* Do you go there to hear God speak to you? *Do you want to?*

Luke 1:14-19 (ESV) 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. 16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, 17 and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." 18 And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." 19 And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

02. Israel (vs 19)

- What happened to the people of Israel during the 400 years God was seemingly silent?
- **God has not spoken in a new way to his people in over 400 years.**
God had not spoke through:
1) His audible voice, 2) a Prophets mouth, 3) an Angels mouth, or 4) His word penned for all to hear since Malachi penned these words quoted here in Luke by this angel.
- **Many of the people of Israel by now – had twisted and perverted the words of God to create a God in their own image. The living Words of God had ceased being living words.**
- *God's words had become a stiff moral code and formula to get blessings from God.*
- *They had so distorted His words and ceased seeing them as alive – they believed God had left them in silence for 400 years and abandoned them to suffer under Roman rule.*

When we do not believe God's word – there are times God seems painfully silent.

Luke 1:20-24 (ESV) 20 And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." 21 And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. 22 And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. 23 And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. 24 After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, 25 "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

03. Zechariah (vs 20)

- What caused this righteous man to doubt the words of God?
Zechariah, a man who recognized his need for a Savior, still doubted God (hence his need for a savior). He was old, his wife was old – and God's written didn't promise him a child. But God came to Zechariah with an angel to have this message personally delivered – yet he doubted.
Sometimes we believe what is easiest to believe – this is what our sinful side is bent toward.
- **Because of Zechariah's unbelief in God's words, God silenced (muted) him.**

After his wife conceived – he probably believed. But for nine long months he lived in a painful silence. But listen to his words after his son was brought to the temple to be dedicated and circumcised.

Luke 1:59-64 (ESV) 59 And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, 60 but his mother answered, “No; he shall be called John.” 61 And they said to her, “None of your relatives is called by this name.” 62 And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. 63 And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they all wondered. 64 And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God.

Even in his painful silence – his muting by God – God had comforted Zechariah’s soul so much that as soon as his mouth could speak – he blessed God – praising His name.

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God is never silent!

There are seasons when God’s voice seems quiet, but God is never silent. He is always speaking.

Story –

Hearing God in the quiet:

- **Why did God hear Elizabeth and Zechariah’s prayers?**

Luke 1:13 (ESV) But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard.

Did God hear them because they suddenly became right or good enough for God to hear their prayers?

Luke 1:6 (ESV) And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.

No. They had been “walking” – an ongoing action – blamelessly for a while.

- **When did God hear Elizabeth and Zechariah’s prayers?**

From before the first time they prayed.

Then why was God seemingly silent? Why did he not answer them directly?

Psalms 139:4 (ESV) Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

I don’t know why He did not answer them directly.

But I do not he was not silent.

He spoke through His words to their soul for years.

He spoke of his love for them, his care for them, His forgiveness for them, His acceptance of them.

He spoke of how they could love, how could they join him in this great redemption plan for all people (but they could never have imagined that would mean being the parents of the one who would tell the world that the Savior is coming).

He spoke and they heard!

- **Why does God hear you pray?**

Because you desire to be right before God.

Or, because of you are righteousness in Christ before God.

- **When does God hear you pray?**

Before you say it.

- **How do we hear Him speak?**

His Word is the only way we can be sure it is His voice.

He echoes His words through other believers, His Spirit in us, creation, and more.

God silence Zechariah and that was painful for sure – but I bet from his reaction at John’s birth – it was biggest life changing 9 months of his life.

Maybe we should be more silent and we would hear and believe God’s word is active and alive.

Maybe if we silent – just a tad more – we would know the real comfort only God’s Spirit can bring in the midst of season when the quiet is painful.

- Prayers

God help me believe – that Your Word is Your living and True voice.

John 1:1 (ESV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

God move me to hear You speak in – Your word, Your people, Your Spirit, Your creation, etc.

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