

The Skill to be Still

Summary

This sermon explores the difference between the Holy Spirit being present versus being apparent in our lives. Using the metaphor of a mountain hidden by smog in Redlands, California, the pastor illustrates how God's Spirit dwells within believers but is often obscured by the "noise pollution" and "sin pollution" of our daily lives. The central message is that when we pray "Come Holy Spirit," we're not asking an absent God to arrive, but rather asking the present God to become apparent to us. The sermon emphasizes that encountering God requires both believing in His presence and His willingness to be found, while addressing two major obstacles: our inability to be still in a culture that values constant activity, and unconfessed sin that clouds our spiritual vision. The solution involves developing a consistent practice of stillness before God and addressing sin patterns that hinder our awareness of His presence.

Discussion Questions

1. **The Smog Metaphor:** How does the illustration of the hidden mountain in Redlands relate to your own experience of God's presence? What kinds of "smog" in your life might be obscuring your awareness of God?
2. **Present vs. Apparent:** What's the difference between the Holy Spirit being present in your life versus being apparent? Can you think of times when you've experienced God's presence more clearly than usual?
3. **Stillness and Modern Life:** The sermon mentions three inventions (public clocks, lightbulbs, and iPhones) that have made stillness more difficult. How do these or other modern influences affect your ability to be still before God?
4. **God's Gentle Whisper:** In the story of Elijah, God spoke not in the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a gentle whisper. Why do you think God often chooses to communicate subtly rather than dramatically? What might this teach us about how to listen for Him?
5. **Sin as Pollution:** The sermon describes sin as "pollution" that obscures our spiritual vision. How does unconfessed or persistent sin affect our relationship with God and our ability to sense His presence?
6. **Practical Stillness:** The pastor recommends 4 minutes of daily stillness before God. What challenges would you face in implementing this practice? What benefits might come from it?
7. **"Doing Church" vs. Encountering God:** The sermon warns about being proficient at "doing church" without genuinely encountering God. How can we guard against going through religious motions while missing authentic spiritual connection?