

Who's Afraid of...God's Silence!

Habakkuk 1:1-13

June 2, 2019

I am amazed at the progress in the technology of headphones. I remember having a set of headphones as a teenager that were like ear muffs on steroids. I'm not sure who enjoyed them more...my parents who didn't have to listen to my selection of music, or me...I could crank up my rock and roll as loud as I wanted without bothering my parent's desire for peace and quiet.

The headphones have progressed to "ear buds." Most ear buds have a wire that you simply plug into your listening device. It is awesome as long as the wire is connected. I remember traveling with a couple of young toddler-age grandkids on a long road trip. Their mom had hooked them up with ear buds so they could listen to their DVD movies. Soon we hear from the older of the two, **"I can't hear the movie!!!"** It was discovered that the reason she couldn't hear the movie was that she had nervously chewed through one of the ear bud wires!!! Not to be outdone, her little brother soon called out, "I can't hear the movie!!!" The reason, yup, he chewed his wire in two. The next quick gas and potty stop mom bought two sets of ear buds. Peace and quiet were a must on a long trip!

Now ear buds are wireless! Wow! Even the headphones are now bluetooth wireless. You see people going around with their "beats" bobbing their heads to their music.

No matter what the type of ear bud or headphone people wear the reason is the same...they want to enjoy their music, podcast or audio book.

What ear buds or headphones do is to allow the person wearing them to block out the noise of the world around them.

I enjoy wearing my earbuds when I am riding the bike to nowhere in the gym and when I am typing the manuscript for the sermon. The reason I wear them in the gym is to block out the outside noise of the grunts and groans and the talk of the people...I am also reading a book. I wear them while typing the message to block out the noise of voices and phone calls in the office. Ever since college days, the background of music blocks out the distracting noise around me and I can concentrate better on my studies, my sermon, my exercising and reading.

It is interesting to watch people who are wearing their headphones or earbuds not hear someone trying to get their attention. I watched the other day someone trying to talk to someone with headphones on. They were not responding. The person had to wave their arms to get the headphone-wearing person's attention. Headphones silence the world as a person enters their own world.

Imagine if I always wore my earbuds. Would you feel as though you were getting my undivided attention? Of course not! Silencing the world is great when you are the one wearing the earbuds. It is frustrating when you are wanting to talk with the person and all you get is silence.

I do understand there are times when "silence is golden." I'm sure silence was golden for my parents when I had my headphones on instead of the big speakers blaring. Silence is not golden when parents want to hear from their kids and there is silence.

Silence is not always golden.

You are waiting to hear on a lab report...silence.

You are waiting to hear from a friend...silence.

You are waiting to hear about a job opportunity...silence.

When is silence not golden to you?

How about God's silence!

Silence is not golden when you are pouring your heart out to God and all you hear is silence.

That silence is not golden...it is painful and isolating. You feel like waving your arms to get God's attention. You feel like his earbuds are in when you are trying to get his attention.

You are not the only one who has cried out to God, "**Can you hear me now!?!?**"

The connection has been dropped. God seems to be giving you the silent treatment.

Many folks in the bible experienced the silence of God. David, Job, Elijah and Habakkuk, the prophet we are discovering today. I would imagine most of us have never heard of, much less know about, Habakkuk, this prophet of the people.

Eugene Peterson in his intro to this book in the Message bible introduced Habakkuk with these words:

"Most prophets, most of the time, speak God's Word to us. They face us with God as he is, not as we imagine him to be. Most prophets are in-your-face assertive, not given to tact, not diplomatic, as they insist that we pay attention to God.

But Habakkuk speaks our word to God. He gives voice to our bewilderment, articulates our puzzled attempts to make sense of things, faces God with our disappointment with God. He insists that God pay attention to us...

The circumstance that aroused Habakkuk took place in the seventh century B.C. The prophet realized that God was going to use the godless military machine of Babylon to bring God's judgment on God's own people---using a godless nation to punish a godly nation! It didn't make sense and Habakkuk was quick and bold to say so.

*Not a day has passed since then that one of us hasn't picked up and repeated Habakkuk's bafflement, '**God you don't seem to make sense...Why are you silent now?**'*

But this prophet companion who stands at our side does something even more important: He waits and he listens.

It is in his waiting and listening---which turns into praying---that he finds himself inhabiting the large world of God's sovereignty."

Habakkuk, in such a desperate time in his life and the life of his people, experienced the silence of God. Did he panic or freak out? I don't think so. I want us to wait with Habakkuk in the silence of God and discover how we are to encounter and experience the silence of God in our desperate times of life.

There are four key verses in this short book of Habakkuk that I believe give us the direction we need in experiencing the silence of God.

"Why are you silent now?" (Habakkuk 1:13) It seems as though God has His headphones or earbuds on and doesn't want to be bothered with the noise of the world...much less our personal cries for help.

"Quiet everyone---a holy silence. Listen!" (Habakkuk 2:20) Maybe we have something we should be doing in order to listen and hear God.

"I'm stopped in my tracks, down on my knees..." (Habakkuk 3:2)
Humility!

"I'm singing joyful praise to God. I'm turning cartwheels of joy to my Savior God. Counting on God's Rule to prevail, I take heart and gain strength." (Habakkuk 3:18-19)

The silence of God is painful. The silence of God can be a cranked up eeriness of silence. Trust the silence.

I appreciate the way Andrew Stone puts it in the lyrics of his song, *"The Silence of God."*

"It's enough to drive a man crazy; it'll break a man's faith, its enough to make him wonder if he's ever been sane, when he's bleating for comfort from thy rod and staff and the heaven's only answer is the silence of God.

*...when the crying fields are frozen by the silence of God...
...the holy lonesome echo in the silence of God."*

From the honesty of our heart we feel the isolation and hurt of the silence of God. We question our faith, our connection. There is *isolation and desolation* instead of *communication and consolation*.

Have our lives become too noisy to hear from God? Are we tuned into our own world, our own music, to the point we can't even hear God's gentle whisper?

Are our voices too loud to hear from God? We are whining to Him and never give Him a chance to reply?

I believe if we muted our listening devices that we are plugged into we might notice the problem with God's silence is not God so much as it is our inability to be quiet...to enter a holy silence and listen!

I have yet to wear my earbuds while hiking. I don't want to miss hearing the birds singing, the wind blowing in the trees, the sounds of nature...except coyotes!!!

We get so caught up in the noisy pollution of our own lives that we block out His desire to speak to us. We are reminded by David, the psalmist, **"Be still and know that I am God..."** (Psalm 46:10) We could paraphrase this with, *"take the earbuds out and hear the voice of God."*

In the humility of the heart we come to a place of where we cry out from the backseat of life, *"Hey, I can't hear anything!"* We have allowed the sin in our life to break the connection we had with God.

The prophet Isaiah put it this way,

"God's ears are not stopped up---he can still hear.

There's nothing wrong with God; the wrong is in you.

Your wrongheaded lives caused the split between you and God.

Your sins got between you so that he doesn't hear." (Isaiah 59:1,2 Message bible)

Unconfessed sin can block, chew away at God's communication line. Cry out to God and confess the sin you have allowed to chew through your communication with him. With a restored heart we can then be ready to hear from God...to even trust him in the silence...to even PRAISE Him in the silence.

Trust the silence!

God's silence is never random or indifferent. So often great truths, lessons of faith, spiritual direction and strength come after "silence of God" moments.

God wants us to come to him with humble hearts and let him know of our struggles and doubts.

However, his answers, his timing, may not be what we expect or want to hear.

His timing is perfect. Trust the silence!

Trusting His silence leads to a quiet inner peace and hope and not a bitter resignation.

Daniel prayed and prayed and by faith he wrote, **"When I couldn't see God's hand (or hear Him) I could trust His heart."** (Daniel 9:23)

Trust the heart of God...even in the silence of God.

God is not absent in the silent.

God's presence is in the silence. He doesn't leave or forget us.

Trust the silence by running towards God to listen. (Proverbs 18:10)

James, a disciple of Jesus learned this when he wrote, "**Come near to God and he will come near to you.**" (James 4:8 NIV)

We draw near to God in silence...confession...reading His Word... prayer...stillness...listening!

God is never the One who walks away or puts on the headphones. He listens. He hears. He will speak in His timing. Have we ever thought that God has already spoken and we didn't want to hear what He had to say to us? Surely He wasn't talking to me. Did you have your earbuds in? Is there sin in your life that has disconnected you from hearing God?

We come today to a connection place...His holy table of communion. It begins with confession. It is a place to be still and quiet. It is a place of humility of heart. It is a holy place to listen. It is a communion of consolation knowing that the silence of God is often the most profound statements of life and faith He has to speak to us.

This is a place of grace to trust the silence of God.
This is a place of the heart to trust the heart of God.
In the silence experience the grace, love and joy that God has for you!
Don't fear the silence of God.

Trust the silence!

