

Sermon. April 12, 2015
Congregational Church in South Glastonbury
Rev. Dr. Robert S. Henderson

May the words of my mouth and meditations within our hearts be acceptable to you, our rock and our redeemer.

“Finding your voice, finding your way”

“I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.” Psalms 116: 1-2

On February 1, 1924 the New York Symphony Orchestra received a letter after they had played Beethoven’s 9th Symphony on their radio concert.

The writer said she could neither hear nor see but she had placed her hand on the radio speaker.

She said that to her amazement she could feel the vibrations but also the impassioned rhytm, the throb and the urge of the music.

She said she could distinguish the cornets, the roll of the drums,.

She wrote that the great chorus throbbed against her fingers.

She wrote “then all the instuments and voices burst forth like an ocean of heavenly vibration.

She said she could not help but remember that the great Beethoven who poured forth such a flood of sweetness into the world was deaf like herself. She wrote that she marveled at the power of his spirit by which out of his pain he brought such joy for others.”

With kindness regards and best wishes

Helen Keller

Helen Keller who was the first deafblind woman to get her bachelors degree and who died not far from here in Easton Ct. in 1968,

One deaf person hearing the voice of another deaf person.

We hear not only through our ears but through our hands, our feelings, our hearts.

‘I love the Lord, my voice was heard’ says the Psalmist

Being heard has something to do with the Lord. Something to do with love.

Something to do with finding our way.

Being heard is something I do not take for granted. Having ears that work does not guarantee hearing.

We can spend lots of time with someone. .and never feel heard by them or actually ever really hear them.

We can hear only what we want to hear.. Some people are only heard when they get into trouble or when they are angry.

Someone might be trying to get our attention right now and we haven't heard them. They say some people do not get hearing aides because they don't want to hear the people they live with.

We can be heard by strangers on airplanes and not heard by people we know.

We can be heard by people we dislike and not heard by people we love.

Some of us hide our voice so we will fit it. Some of us are scared to speak up and remain unknown.

People are known for their voice. People are missed when we do not hear their voice. Some people have famous voices:

Garrison Keilor. Andrea Bocelli I recently heard the voice of Sigmund Freud lately on an old audio tape. Pavarotti. Elvis,. Robert Frost. John Kennedy. Placio Domingo. Can you hear the voice of your father or your mother or you own voice when you were younger?.

W.H. Auden ...the wonderful poet said "all I have is a voice."

How well do we hear the voices in our lives?

When I began kindergarden I stuttered. With my eagerness to talk, I would often forget I stuttered until it was too late. I would be called upon and go through that embarrassing pain of stuttering. Stuttering left a wound on my soul.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said “the human voice is the organ of the soul.”

When God spoke to Elijah on Mount Horeb, He could have done it with the wind, an earthquake, or a fire. But He didn't. But instead God did it with a “still small voice”

The STILL SMALL voice.

There is something called the “still small voice.” It is in other people , it is in us , and it in God.

Jesus said : Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

Other people depend on someone hearing them, hearing their still small voice.

Do we hear the still small voice of the other people in our lives?.

In a hospital in the Midwest there were two seriously ill men who shared the same room.

One of them was allowed to sit up in his bed for one hour each afternoon to drain fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the only window in the room. The other man had to spend all day and night on his back. It was a very difficult time for both men as you can imagine

The men talked for hours with each other. They spoke of their families, their jobs, their times in the military, places they had traveled on their vacations.

Every afternoon when the man near the window got to sit up in bed he would describe to his room mate all the things he could see outside the window.

His roommate lived for those one hour periods each afternoon. They kept him alive as he heard of the activity and color of the outside world.

The man by the window described the beautiful park with a lovely lake where there were ducks and swans and sometimes little children playing with their boats. He described young lovers who were walking arm in arm and the city skyline. His roommate would close his eyes and imagine what he was being told.

One afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by. Even though the band could not be heard the room mate could see it through the exciting descriptive words.

This went on for several days. One morning the nurse brought water for their baths only to find the man near the window had died. She was sad and called the hospital attendants to remove the body.

The other man asked the nurse if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone.

Slowly and with pain man propped himself on one elbow he took his first look at the outside world. Finally he said to himself I can't wait. He slowly turned to look out the window beside the bed. All he saw was a blank wall.

The patient asked his nurse what could have compelled his deceased room mate to describe such wonderful interesting things outside the window. The nurse said that his roommate was in fact blind and could not even see the wall.

Perhaps she said he could feel you needed the encouragement. The still small voice. is often a hidden voice but very real...that says I am in need of your help....I need your support and encouragement. I am worse off than you think or than I appear.

The still small voice is in the people we live with or work beside or right here in our church.

At the same time there is a still small voice in us. There is a voice to our soul. Often we know it when we are with our own silence, perhaps on a long walk or early in the morning when we are the only ones awake. Other parts of us might try to squash our own voice and we have to battle with ourselves.

Vincent Van Gogh said If you hear a voice within you say 'you cannot paint,' then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced.

I confess that I have found it difficult to hear and honor my own voice. It is much easier for me to listen to your voice and make sure it is heard.

In my semi retired life now I have more time for myself than I have ever had. I find myself doing a lot of writing. It is a personal thing. I am finding that the writing is helping me find my still small voice. I think there has always been a writer inside me. The stuttering wounded that writer and he is still healing. The writer asked if he could come along today, so here are a couple of his poems. In them you will hear something of the still small voice in me.

Wandering

Perhaps it doesn't matter what time you wake up
or have your last cup of coffee
or whether you go to church on Easter
or watch the sunrise with a stranger
or even a friend.

Perhaps nothing matters except everything
and anything that is alive
anything that forces us to close your eyes
anything that amazes a small corner of our soul
or even a piece of our boredom.

Perhaps if we anticipate for one single
solitary thing to come into our life
it will never show up
but instead a replacement will be sent
which we will never like
but need.

Perhaps the best thing we can ever do
is be ordinary and alert
writing down the truth of what we find
in the dark moments
and those times when we are barely here.

Perhaps a moose will come and kiss us on the nose
and we will wonder who sent her
and perhaps it was someone who has known us
from afar and watched us
and never said hello.

Perhaps the meaning to our
whole lives will come to us
when there is silence beside the
anxiety to live
and we will hear something no one else
will understand
nor even recognize.

Perhaps it is when we laugh that we
feel our tears and are fed by the invisible
forces that has guarded our boundaries
and flooded our path with questions

that are the most important ones
because they have no answers.

Perhaps it is in the evening that
we stand the tallest as we prepare for death
grieving our good byes
powdered with lasting memories
filled with small spaces
where the snow drifts has left us to wander.

Here is one about marriage.....

Perhaps love

Our joining up, so long ago,
has resulted in all of this, before us now,
sweet touches, outrageous surprises,
wrestling with the dark angel,
chancing head first into life and death
meandering, hesitating, coaxing, surviving,
going for broke, and waiting for the one moment..

I look at you now, as I catch my own reflection,
are we becoming like each other,
has what we found in each other,
now to live in us,
we fall asleep in each others safety,
our grandchildren melt us into one,
our children cascade into one deep kiss,

we eat from the same garden,
our marriage closes our eyes,
it keeps our health,
it allows for what we do the worst, and best,
it criticizes us only when we don't try.

Life has come, we have been opened,
there will be an end, as there was a beginning,
we live in each others keeping,
we have eaten a thousand meals, at the same table,
we have been private, we have known how the heart breaks.

We have made room for each other,
even what is dark,
you have your cup of tea,
as I eat my can of beans,
marriage has provided breath,
wonder, and tears.

Love lasts and is hidden behind the leaf,
We walk slower now, with purpose,
we each remember, being on our own,
gifts come freely, we understand more, and less.
We have been held together, in spite of ourselves,
We have tasted what is at the bottom of the well

Life together has glistened,
with the twinkle of a dark moon and a thousand stars.

This was is entitled :

Winter

There are days you wake up and the world is broken,

hearts have been silenced,

faith has disappeared,

evil has brought carnage,

I move with slow questions,

my soul does not sing.

Yesterday people were massacred in a Paris office
as they tried to bring a smile to the world.

A friend in our church died suddenly,

We were told our car would need major repairs.

A father battles cancer in his sinus.

A man is told he has ALS

and rushes to take his grandkids to the zoo while he can still walk

Life brings difficult news,

as the fierce winter cold
intensifies hibernating life to get up and walk,
trying not to stumble, as the soft spirit
is in anguish, unsettled, frozen.

There are no flowers as I face the wind,

The only music is for those in grief,

clumsy sadness laces each movement,

I reach to regain my footing,

strength hides out in weakness,

music is made in the blind little girl,

I pray slowly, pausing, aching, alone

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Another time will come.

I must be a host now

to the fire that burns in the shatters.

I wait, holding on,

the elephant is in tears.

Waking Up

Let our eyes open to the freshness of the morning
tendered only by a small thought of being simple
as we gather in where we have been
in the stories that have traveled us
to far corners of the nightly mysteries.

Behoove us to be gentle to ourselves
as the world brings strong demands
and expectations that imagine us to be
mightier than we are.

We are small in the face of deep lives
We strive to stay in place as heavy winds
pile challenge to every step and turn.

Imagine in us where we have hardly known
the frequencies of ancient rhythms
where each has its own moment
our lives twirl with uniqueness
and fall head first into single steps
leading to where we are to try.

Up ahead lies the majesty of the sacred space
where we are to partner with that
which brings life
captivated by the passion to be
wholly balanced by the circles
and dead ends of all efforts.

May today be known slowly
with the courage of gracefulness
as we greet the wild and the forsaken
the changes and the strangeness,
even that which pushes us away.

May all of us always remember our own still small voice and make sure it stays alive..

God too has a still small voice and if we are quiet enough we can hear it. Often we hear God voice as we listen to the stories of life. Let's listen for it as I close now with one of those stories of life I recently heard.

There was once a pleasant looking man who they called Pappy. He was an older man and had a wonderful smile. He enjoyed whistling and owned a small repair shop .

He ran the shop by himself and was respected and adored in town. He had a secret sadness which he never talked about. He did not do much business but just enough to make ends meet.

In the back of the shop there was a certain special area where he worked on his own things. He called it his memory area. There were old watches, clocks, an electric train, antique toys.

As he worked there sometimes he would close his eyes and enjoy the stream of memories that came back.

One day he was working on an old railroad lantern. As he worked on it, he found himself whistling a railroad tune and he remembered his time working on the railroad.

As he worked on the lantern the little bell on the front door rang and a customer walked in. It was a young girl who had curly hair. She said in a whispered voice. "Hello sir" She was shy and bashful and she said she was looking for something to buy for a Christmas present.

Pappy had several items he had repaired which were now for sale.

He asked who is the gift for? She said it is for my grandpa. But I don't know what to get. Pappy made some suggestions. There was a nice pocket watch he had just fixed..

The little girl did not answer. She walked to the door and put her small hand on on it and wiggled the door which rang the bell. Pappy's was happy when he saw the girl smile .

The little girl said that her Mom had told her that her Grandpa loved music..

Pappy's expression changed. He did not want to hurt the little girl but he had to be honest with her he thought. He said that he was sorry but the little bell on the door was not for sale. He said there was little radio that her Grandpa might like.

The little girl looked at the radio and said no, she did not think he would like it.

To help her understand Pappy told the little girl the story of how the bell had been in his family for many years and that was why he couldn't sell it.

As he said that suddenly Pappy thought of how the rest of the family were all gone now, except for his estranged daughter whom he had not seen in 10 years. He started talking to himself as the little girl looked about the rest of the store.

He said to himself Why not pass the bell along to someone who will share it with a loved one. God only knows where it will end up anyways. He was not getting any younger.

He told the little girl he had changed his mind and he would sell her the bell.

The little girl smiled thank you very much. I am sure my grandfather will be very heppy.

Pappy smiled and felt good about helping the girl. However he knew he was going to miss the bell. The little girl said she would take good care of it.

Then the little girl became very quiet. She looked at Pappy and with great concern. How much will it cost?

Pappy said...well....how much do you have to spend. She pulled her small coin purse out and emptied \$2.47 onto the counter. Pappy said...little lady, this is your lucky day. That bell costs exactly \$2. 47.

After the little girl left, Pappy wondered if the Grandfather would like the bell. He knew he would have if such a sweet little girl would have given to him.

As he was turning out the light to go home, Pappy thought he heard the bell. He turned to the door and there was the little girl. She was ringing the bell and smiling. Pappy was puzzled .

"What's this, little lady? Have you changed your mind?"

"No," she grinned. "Momma says it's for you."

Before Pappy had time to say another word, the child's mother stepped into the doorway, and choking back a tear, she gently said, "Hello, Dad."

The little girl ran and jumped into her Grandpa arms.
The still small voice of God heals broken relationships into new connections of love.

Promise me that you will find and hold onto your still small voice. Promise me you will listen as best you can for the still small voice of each person you meet in your life.

Promise me you will spend your days listening for the still small voice of God.

This is how we will find our way. In a world of extreme weather, extreme violence, extreme technology, we need to listen even more closely for the still small voice. It is a voice we do not create or own. It is a voice that arises when the soul has been touched and life has become a meadow of sacred mysteries.

“I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.” Psalms 116: 1-2