

“THIS IS MY SON!”
Isaiah 42:1-9, Psalm 29, Matthew 3:13-17
January 11 & 12, 2020

What does the voice of God sound like? When God speaks to us, what can we expect to hear?

Throughout the Scriptures we have a variety of responses of how people heard the voice of God and see the different ways that God speaks. But what does God’s voice sound like for us? How do we hear Him?

Rev. Bill White, outreach and college pastor at Emmanuel Church in Paramount, California had an experience of God speaking to him. Listen to his account:

Back in 2003, “I was kneeling in prayer in the front room of our house at 6:30 in the morning. I had just confessed sins and was asking God for a blessing that day, needing to feel loved by Him.

“Our little boy Timothy, who was 22 months old at the time, had just gotten up, and I noticed out of the corner of my eye that he had sneaked quietly into the front room. He's always quiet in the morning when I'm praying because his mom tells him to be, but this time he ambled straight over to me, put a hand on my clasped hands, and said, "Hi, special one. Hi, special one. Hi, special one."

“Never once had he called me that before. Six times he called me ‘special one.’ He said it enough for me actually to get it - that God was speaking to me and giving me a blessing.”¹

God speaks to us in a variety of ways so that we not only hear His voice, but also recognize that it is Him telling us something. Throughout the Old Testament we hear how God spoke to His prophets and priests and leaders. It’s a strange thing for us today, but we need to be open to hearing God speak.

But it is appropriate for us to start by looking at our Old Testament lesson of Psalm 29 that helps us to see the power of the voice of the Lord our God. This is one way that the Lord speaks to us – in power and might. Your outline today lists a variety of ways that King David says God speaks. Let’s go through them so that we don’t miss the power of the voice of God.

First, God speaks like the **ROAR** of the ocean. Living here in Sheboygan it is not uncommon to

¹ (PreachingToday.com, *More Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003] pg. 91)

hear the roar of the waves of Lake Michigan being thrust up onto the shoreline. My wife and I live three blocks away from the lake, and many days the roar of the waves is really loud. The crashing waters roar steadily as the wind pushes the waves up onto the shore! It's no wonder that verse 3 of Psalm 29 says, "...*the glorious God thunders, and His voice echoes over the ocean.*" There is such power in the waves, and the voice of God is just like that, often roaring to us, even to the point that it can be frightening. And when the waters heap up during hurricanes along coastal waters, the roar can be almost deafening, and the power of the waves is overwhelmingly destructive. The voice of God can be like the power of the waves crashing against the shore.

Then we read in verse 4 that "*the voice of the Lord is heard in all its **MIGHT** and majesty.*" It is like the sonic BOOMS we used to hear caused by jets flying faster than the speed of sound. Suddenly the clear sky bursts forth with this mighty thunderous boom that rattles the windows and shakes the house. It catches us off guard and surprises and startles us and even paralyzes us with fear. God's voice is powerful enough to sound for miles, reaching thousands of people at the same time.

But then the voice of God is powerful enough that it *breaks the cedars,*" as we hear in verse 5. Mighty trees snapped like twigs. Have you ever seen the devastation following a tornado? Oaks, maples, aspens, pines and trees of all other types are left twisted and broken and sheared off by the power of the wind. And then we see the kind of destruction that it does to buildings of all kinds; wood, metal, stone, concrete – the power of the wind destroys them all. The voice of God has that kind of power to completely devastate whatever is in its path. But in the midst of that devastation, when the wind is ripping up all that is around us, it is tremendously hard to actually hear the voice of God, because is so powerful that it leaves us completely afraid.

But then King David describes the voice of God effecting even the mountains. He says that the voice of God makes mountains **SHAKE** and tremble (vs. 6). David says it's like calves jumping or young bulls leaping. Have you ever experienced an earthquake? There is a distinct rumbling in the earth that reverberates as the shock waves rip through the rocky ground. Few buildings can stand up

under the trembling that takes place, and rock slides and avalanches tumble down the mountains as the boulders leap and jump. The voice of God is powerful enough to split the rock and shake the mountains. Terrifying! And devastating!

And David says in Psalm 29:7 that “*the voice of the Lord makes LIGHTNING flash!*” And you all know the sound that comes right after the lightning flashes? THUNDER! The loud clash comes as the electricity first splits the air and then comes crashing back together. It rocks the house! It sends cats and dogs and people running for the basement, taking cover. The voice of God can be instantaneous with the flash of lightning, getting our attention and sending fear through us.

But then David writes this strange statement, “*His voice makes the desert shake...*” (29:8). We know that when sand is shaken enough it becomes soft and anything standing on top of it suddenly sinks within the depths of that sand. Shifting sand causes sink-holes that gobble up anything on top of it. The voice of the Lord shakes the sand enough to wipe villages clean away and caravans and even people. The voice of the Lord can be dangerous for us to hear.

Likewise, we hear that “*the Lord’s voice...STRIPS the leaves from the trees*” (vs. 9). Lately we’ve been experiencing the howling winds in excess of 45 mph. Being in the woods during some of those winds, I was able to see the leaves stripped from their branches and carried hundreds of feet away. It’s not hard then to cower in fear and cry out “*Glory to God!*” in the midst of the howling voice of the Lord.

But it is the power of the voice of the Lord that proves that it is indeed the Lord who **RULES all things**, even “*the deep waters*” of the oceans, and the mighty mountains, and the deserts and the forests, over all the land. When the Lord speaks, it is in our best interest to listen to Him and discover what He is saying, lest we all be destroyed by the power of His voice.

But we need to see that the power of the voice of the Lord also gives strength and peace to us. When we come to understand God’s awesome power, even in His voice, we can begin to see that His voice is not always given for the destruction of the nations, but also for strength and peace to those who

love Him and follow Him. It is no wonder, then, that David tells us, “*The Lord gives strength to His people and blesses them with peace*” (29:11). So though the voice of the Lord our God has tremendous power attached to it, God’s voice also gives encouragement and hope when we obey Him and seek Him. His voice gives guidance and support, it opens our eyes to the possibilities that seem way out of our control, and it grants us the ability to know that if His voice has that much power to destroy, it also has that much power to build up and create and empower His people.

And it is in this support and encouragement that we then hear about the Lord’s Servant, as described in Isaiah 42. This chapter starts out with the words, “*The Lord says...*” or in some translations, “*Behold...*” This calling of God shifts our minds from the warning Isaiah was giving the people of Israel in chapter 41 about the danger of following pagan gods. Here’s the voice of God again speaking to Isaiah. I wonder how God spoke to him that he could hear and understand and then write down what the Lord said. But no matter how, God spoke to Isaiah to describe His Servant and to proclaim that THIS was the One to rightly follow, not pagan false gods.

So the Lord Says! “*Here is My servant, whom I strengthen – the One I have chosen, with whom I am pleased.*” Remember, there is great power in the voice of the Lord, so when these words are spoken, God has a lot for us to listen to.

Here we see that God has someone He is directing to come to us. It is God’s CHOSEN who is lifted up. This is the Servant who will do God’s will and bring the message of Salvation. It is not a self-proclaimed prophet, or a dictatorial king proclaiming to be the One the Lord will use. This is GOD’S Choice of the One He determines. But what is the purpose of the Servant of God? Why does God need to send This One to do His work? We have to remember that this proclamation comes to remind the people that the Lord is God and that He is the One we are to worship.

So God details the One who will come for Him. It is the One, God says, “*...with Whom I am pleased*” (42:1). For God to be pleased with His Chosen One, He has to be without sin, having never rebelled against any of God’s laws and commands. This One must be spotless, perfect in every way.

That is the only way that God can be “pleased with Him.” He has to be willing to do all that God desires, becoming the perfect representation of God to the people here on the earth.

This Servant will be filled with God’s **SPIRIT**, so that He can do the work of God, working justly and righteously with the people in order to lead them back to the worship of only God Almighty. When the Holy Spirit is within this Servant, He will know what the will of God is, and be able to share the Word of God with the people, and will be bold to speak the Word of the Lord. This will be in order to bring justice to the earth.

But this Servant will not be loud, calling attention to Himself, but will humbly speak to the people in order to win them back to the Lord. He will not be like the zealots who boldly stand up in the streets condemning the peoples or the leaders for their disobedience. Rather He will bring encouragement, nurturing, **SUPPORT** and enrichment to give new strength to those who are weak, and turn the hearts of the people back to the One and only God. He will bring hope and teaching to the nations, enabling them to come to know the Lord God so that they may see the benefits of following only Him.

No matter what opposition He faces, He will continue to plead with the people to get them to see the error of their ways and call them back to worship of the Almighty God of the universe. This servant, that the Lord God has chosen, has **POWER** to bring justice unlike anyone else we have ever seen on the face of the earth. He will have the authority of God to do wondrous things. The power given to this Servant will enable Him to bring justice to all those who choose to follow Him, bringing the light of the Lord to the nations of the earth.

In this way the Servant of the Lord will open eyes blinded by the things of this world so that they might see the things of God. By the light that he brings, the people will be able to see clearly the ways of the Lord. They will see beyond their fear, beyond their hurts, beyond their doubts, beyond their disappointments, and beyond their misunderstandings. The light of the Lord will shine from this Servant such that the people will be transformed from death to life.

And this servant will set **PRISONERS** free from their captivity to sin and darkness. He will release them from their compulsions and their addictions. He will break the bonds to their enslavement to the things of this world so that they will experience the joy of the Lord. Though they may be forced to dwell in the darkest dungeon, or forced into slavery, though they may be held captive by enemies and used for vial purposes, this Servant will bring restoration to their lives, freedom to their souls, and new life to those who had no hope. When the people put their trust and faith in Him, the Servant of the Lord will free them from the wages of sin and death so that they might find eternal life with God.

In all these things, the Servant of the Lord will demonstrate the glory of the Lord God. No other has ever, nor will ever, show the radiance of God's glory. This the Lord has spoken with the power of His voice.

So who is this Servant, the Chosen One from the Lord who will bring justice and do all these wonderful and marvelous things? Who is it that Isaiah is writing about as the Lord speaks to him? We begin to see the answer in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 3:13-17. Listen to this account of the Baptism of Jesus. (READ Matthew 3:13-17)

In the Gospel accounts, we see that at the age of 30 (Luke 3:23) Jesus comes to the Jordan River to fulfill the requirements of God. John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin, is working there calling all the people who will listen to him to repent of their sins and prepare themselves for the Messiah. It's not recorded if John and Jesus had any interactions before this time, but it becomes clear to John that Jesus is indeed the Promised One, the Messiah.

The day that Jesus comes to him for baptism, John **RECOGNIZES** Jesus as the "*Word made flesh to dwell among us*" as we heard in John 1 last week (1:14). John sees that Jesus is the One sent from God as the Servant of the Lord who was pre-existent before him. While God had been preparing John to make the way ready for Jesus to take His place as the Messiah, John knows that Jesus was the Son of God (John 1:34). He states to Jesus, "*I ought to be baptized by You ... and yet You have come to me!*" (Matthew 3:14).

You see, Jesus had come to begin His ministry, and that required that Jesus fulfill what God requires. He begins His public ministry by submitting to the cleansing ritual of John. Now, Jesus had no sin that He needed to repent of. He was pure and holy before the Lord and the people. But that's what the baptism of John was all about – repentance of sin – FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD. Jesus came as the Messiah, the Chosen One of God, the Servant of the Lord. So why did He need the baptism of John?

In His baptism, Jesus is making the transition from son of Mary and Joseph, to the Son of God. He was shifting His focus from the ways of a carpenter to the ways of the Messiah. He was now claiming His position as the Only Begotten Son of God, the Father, and as He came to the Jordan River to be baptized by John, Jesus is letting go of all of His earthly focus in order to focus solely on doing the work that His Father had sent Him to do. He is changing His focus from the things of the world to the things of God, and publicly transitioning to His work as the Savior of the world. From now on, Jesus is not called the carpenter of Nazareth, but Rabbi, teacher, and the Son of Man. And as He makes this transition, there in the water of the Jordan River, His baptism begins His new career as Savior.

And it is at this point that three very important things happen that proves Jesus' position as the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah, the Savior of the world. First, as He is coming up out of the water, the HEAVENS open. Why is this so important? Up until that time, there was a separation between the earth and the home of God (Heaven). But at this very point, the sky slits and heaven and earth are once more connected.

Then, second, the Holy Spirit descends like a dove and settles on Jesus. But you might say, "If Jesus was with the Father at the beginning of creation as one of the Trinity, wouldn't He already have the Holy Spirit in Him?" While He may have had communion with the Holy Spirit before He came to earth, this is the first time as a man that Jesus is once more filled with the Holy Spirit. He has grown "*in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and men,*" (Luke 2:52), but it is here at His baptism that Jesus, as a human, receives the Holy Spirit of God into His life. Yet, this is the fulfillment of Isaiah

42:1, “*The Lord says...I have filled Him with My Spirit, and He will bring justice to every nation.*”

Before His baptism, Jesus’ time was not yet ready to complete the prophecy of the Lord’s Servant. Only here, when the heavens are opened, does the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus and fills Him.

But the third marvelous thing that happens is God speaks! “*Then a voice said from heaven, ‘This is My own dear Son, with whom I am pleased’*” (Matt. 3:17). The very words out of Isaiah 42:1, “*...WITH WHOM I AM PLEASED.*” Here at the baptism of Jesus, God confirms that Jesus is His Chosen One, and this Chosen One is perfect, spotless, pure and holy before Him. And God is pleased with Him as His Son, now beginning the work that He was sent to do. The work of the Salvation of the world had now begun by the Only Begotten Son of God. And it starts in the waters of the Jordan River.

So if the voice of God spoke here at Jesus’ baptism, what did it sound like? Was it Thunder? Was it a roar, or a flash of lightning, or the rumbling of the earth, or the shaking of the desert? No, this time, God’s power is used to proclaim the presence of His Holy Son, the Beloved One, and His Word is spoken in a way that all can hear and understand – THIS IS MY SON! And the only other time we hear these words from God the Father is at the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain, just prior to Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem, to begin His final passion to pay for the sins of the world. Yet, there (Matt. 17:1-13) God proclaims to the disciples Peter, James and John, the words, now “*...listen to Him!*” (17:5).

So if Jesus is the Son of God, the Chosen One, the One whom the Father is pleased with, Why don’t we RECEIVE Him? Why don’t we recognize His position as God made like us to free us from our sins? Why are we so reluctant to let Him be the Lord of our lives?

And if Jesus is this Servant of the Lord who will bring justice to all the nations, Why don’t we OBEY Him? He has all the authority of God the Father, so why do we refuse to follow His commands? Why do we choose instead to resort to follow the ways of the world and not the Son of God?

And if Jesus is the Messiah of the world, Why don’t we LISTEN to Him? Why do we listen to the things of this world instead and fall from God’s favor? God’s voice proclaims to the whole world, “THIS IS MY SON,” yet we chose to follow our own ways, our own thoughts, our own desires. Maybe

we need to heed the voice of God once more and yield to His power, His authority and His commands, so that we might indeed, find His favor once more. And then we will find the encouragement and the strength and the power of God in our lives to do the work that He has called us to do through Him.

Let's pray. Father God, thank You for being a wondrously powerful God. Even Your voice displays Your awesome power and authority over all the earth. Father, it is so hard for us to hear You speak to us, because we are afraid of You when Your voice thunders and roars. Help us instead, to hear You speak to us in that still small voice so that we might hear and understand Your words. Give us the courage to accept Jesus as Your Only Begotten Son, the Savior of the world Who has come to set us free from sin and death. Give us ears to hear You calling our name so that we might follow You with all our heart, soul mind and strength. This we pray in Jesus' holy and precious Name. AMEN.