

Sermon:

Silence... Silence is mysterious. Silence is inviting. Silence can be frightening. Silence can be life changing.

The French composer Claude Debussy was credited in saying, "Music is not in the notes, but in the silence between them." The silence between notes is where we experience music. One might say, "If it wasn't for the silence, how would we hear the music?" Things happen, in silence.

Our friend and Old Testament prophet, Elijah, discovered the power of silence. Today, we find Elijah hiding out in a cave. He was afraid and he was frustrated. He and God had just defeated the prophets and the god of Baal in a challenge of might. You might call it the holy BBQ challenge. Look it up in 1 Kings chapter 18.

You'd think this was a good thing and Elijah would be riding high on his victory. But, word got to the evil queen, Jezebel and she was NOT happy. She sent her army to kill Elijah. AND Elijah high tailed it out of there as fast as he could and he ends up at Mt. Horeb or Mt. Sinai, the same place that Moses encountered God in a burning bush and the giving of the commandments. And now, Elijah is in this same place, shaking in fear and hiding out in a cave.

Even after God proved God's power and strength with the Holy BBQ challenge with Baal and providing for Elijah in the wilderness as he fled for his life, Elijah is now huddled up in a cave, paralyzed by fear.

God shows up and asks Elijah why he's there? This is not where God planned Elijah to be at this time. So, God is curious. "What's up, Elijah? Why are you here?"

Elijah responds, and you might picture him throwing a little tantrum. "I've done everything you asked me to do, and the Israelites respond by turning their noses up at your covenant and your altars and they've killed your prophets. And now, I'm the only one left and they're after me."

Now, not all of that is true, but for Elijah, in this moment of fear, he doesn't hold back and he lets God know that he is scared, and upset.

God listens to this little tantrum and then tells Elijah to go out on the mountain for God is about to pass by. Just like Moses, on this same mountain, so many years ago, God is about to show up for Elijah and God doesn't want Elijah to miss it.

Still gripped in fear, Elijah stays put in the cave unable and unwilling to move and then... there's a mountain splitting wind, an earthquake and a fire. None of this gets Elijah's attention. None of it.

Still huddled in fear, what follows, does catch Elijah's attention and it's not loud, bright, or earth shaking. What frees Elijah from his fear and draws him out of the cave, out of his fear? God shows up in silence and Elijah, still paralyzed with fear, gets up and is drawn to God.

Like I said earlier, things happen in the silence. Debussy reminds us that music happens in the silence. Mother Teresa said, "If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you." Stuff happens in silence. Transformed lives happen in silence. God happens in silence.

On my last sabbatical in Taizé, France, there was an invitation to gather in a prayer service, three times each day. As a part of each service, there was a stretch of 8 minutes of silent prayer. 8 minutes of thousands of young people gathered from all around the world, gathered together in silent prayer. Of all the amazing experiences that I have been blessed to experience on sabbatical, those 8 minutes of silent prayer, continue to draw me out of my fears, connect me to others and send me to love and to make music with others for the sake of God's kingdom.

Siblings in Christ, you may be huddled in fear and frustration. You may be experiencing earth shaking winds, earthquakes and consuming fires. And, you may be wondering if God even cares or even notices you. If this is you, don't be surprised when God shows up, right where you're at, in some transformational silence. Don't be afraid of the silence. In the silence, God can make music again, in and with your life. Amen.