

Theme: **Shattering the Silence**

Text: John 1: 43 – 51

Season: 2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Date: January 14, 2018

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and Peace to you as you grow in your knowledge of God, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Old Testament reading for today tells us that the Word of the Lord fell silent. It fell silent for about 40 years after the last Judge ruled the people of Israel. The writers of the book of Samuel tells us, **“Now the young man Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.”** (1 Sam. 3:1)

Silence is an interesting phenomenon. Some people cherish silence, while others people think that it is freighting. The silence of God in our life is what some people prefer, while others want God to be more vocal in their lives. In the Old Testament, we find that many people didn't like God speaking to them through His prophets like Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and many others, so eventually God when silent for more than 400 years after the death of the prophet Malachi. (Turn to facing the altar for a minute of silence then turn back.)

Silence makes us uncomfortable, doesn't it? Silence especially makes us feel uncomfortable in a church service, because we're use to having God's Word whirling around us as the pastor tells us God's Words, the songs we sing tells us God's Words and the responses that we say are God's Words. In fact, that's the whole reason why we came to this service, to receive God's Words of assurance, forgiveness and blessings. Silence, makes us wonder what is happening, some of you might even be thinking that I've done something wrong. The pastor isn't talking; the music isn't playing. Did the pastor lose his place, did someone forget the music or are we supposed to be saying or doing something at this time? The whole point is that we don't like silence when we expect to hear someone speaking to us and especially we don't like silence when we are looking for and expecting God's Word to give us guidance and assurance.

So, can you imagine how the people of God must have felt during those 400 years when God's Word went silent. This was no ordinary silence. The voice of God speaking through the prophets was silent for four hundred year, which is twice as long as the United States has been a country.

Oh, I'm sure that we all have had those times of silence in our thoughts, but if that silence goes on for too long, it can be devastating to our mind and our heart. The lack of communication destroys marriages; ruins friendships and can end your career very quickly. Can you imagine what the people of that time must have been thinking? Where was the living voice of God? Where are His prophets? What's become of God and His promises? If God is silent now, then what's my hope for the future? Are His promises any good? Has God abandoned us now and for all eternity? Silence is horrible when it comes to godly silence. Have you ever noticed the bad effect of godly silence on the lives of people, communities and countries? It's devastating and the people in the midst of that silence are always looking for the reason for the evil that is taking over their world.

Then just at the right time the voice of God came back. The silence of God's Word through the prophets was shattered as John the Baptist came from the wilderness, the barren regions of Israel, calling the people to "**prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**" (Is. 40:3)

Have you ever noticed the effect that God's Word has on people, even people who don't want God's Word in their lives? It was the preaching of God's Word by John the Baptist that prepared the way for the Savior of the world. The people were drawn to the message that a greater One is coming to gather the wheat and burn the chaff. The Messiah is coming and is here said John the Baptist and you need to get ready. Don't miss this event! Hold on for this is going to change your life! Get ready now! Or as Bachman Turner Overdrive claimed, "You ain't seen nothing yet!"

With fire and the power of the Holy Spirit, the Messiah comes, but instead of being a terrible judge, awesome to behold He's a lamb. In fact, John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as He walks by and says, "**Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!**" (Jn. 1:29) The Messiah calls disciples and raises the dead to life. Gentiles follow Him; sinners adore Him; little children call Him "the Son of David." The Messiah loves the lame, the mute, the seeing and the blind. In humility, this Messiah touches lepers and washes feet. To be the Lamb of God means to be lowly and gentle and humble to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The world is waiting in silence, even with all the noises coming from all the wrong directions; we still need that Lamb of God. In this world where death lords over us, we sinners

long for that gentle Lamb, who is also our Good Shepherd, because our enemy stalks us with cold efficiency. From the moment we're born, our enemy is doing his evil best to turn us into a spiritual corpses. Satan's purpose is to fill each of our souls with darkness and make sin seem like the good, right and noble thing to do, to silence the Word of God so we wouldn't know anything better. When this happens, we ignore the importance of God's Word for our faith and our lives. We ignore our neighbors, turn against them, whisper against them and treat them as if they were not someone for whom Christ died and rose again to give them and us a new and better life. Yes, no matter what our sins are they're no small thing, they're a personal offense against God! There's no other way of saying this than: Sin is a God-sized problem and you and I are nowhere near big enough to solve it. If we understand anything at all, we need to cover our mouths in silence and open our ears, souls and minds to receive the Lamb of God who took away all our sins.

After all those centuries of silence, some knew they needed to hear God's Word. Andrew and Phillip came to hear what John the Baptist had to say and followed Jesus as He walked by. Jesus invited Andrew and Phillip to come and see what the Lamb of God was doing and they did and they stayed. Andrew when and brought his brother Peter, the rock, and they followed. Jesus called Phillip to "follow me!" and he did. Phillip heard and understood who this Lamb of God is. He went and told his friend Nathanael, "**We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.**" (Jn. 1:45) Nathanael was silently praying for help from God and yet the worlds view of what is right tried to silence God's Word in his life as he responded, "**Can anything good come out of Nazareth?**" **Philip said to him, "Come and see."** (Jn. 1:46)

Come and see how God's love for us would send His Only Son to be conceived and born from a woman, just as He had foretold. The invasion of God's Army to solve our God-sized problem came with the cry of a baby born in a stable in Bethlehem. There are no huge machines of war, but rather a tiny hand that grasps his mother's and father's hands. No uniforms with medals and general's stars, but rather strips of common cloth to swaddle a newborn in and a bright star to light the way for all those who have been studying the Words of God, as they come bearing gifts for a conquering King, the Epiphany of God's Son.

The silence of heaven is broken forever and John recognized Him as the Lamb of God to be slain for us all, even when he was in his own mother's womb. Christ will save all those who trust in Him, just as Moses and the prophets had said. He will save them by dying for them and rising again to give them a new life with their Heavenly Father. We can't fully comprehend the wonders and majesty of the baby in the manger unless we embrace the truth that He is the man on the cross dying for all us sinners and He is the Son of God who will rise again to open the doors of our heavenly home for us. Death and the grave were no match for this Lamb of God, this Savior, this Christ. He is our Savior and he is for us forever.

After years and centuries of silence, some will eagerly hear and say, "**We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.**" (Jn. 1:45) But others filled with the noises of the world will say, "**Can anything good come out of Nazareth?**" (Jn. 1:46) With our God-sized problem, will we try to hold out for a voice more to our own liking? The child of Bethlehem, bathed in the Epiphany light has redeemed you and me. Yes, even sceptics like Nathanael listened to God's Word and let the Holy Spirit go to work in their lives to believe and say, "**Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!**" (Jn. 1:49) You also have trusted this Lamb of God, and He saved you by Grace Alone through Faith Alone in God's Word working in your life.

So, get ready! Repent and believe the Good News! The silence of heaven is shattered! Jesus has come and is coming again! For Jesus tells us like He told Nathanael, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.**" (Jn. 1:51) Do what Phillip did, so many times in his life, and invite your friend and the people who are a little sceptic like Nathanael to, "**Come and see.**" Come and see the Word of God going to work in your life and changing it for eternity. Amen.