

**McCabe United Methodist Church**  
**Pastor Rick Fossum**  
**Can You Hear Me Now?**  
**I Kings 17:8-16 \* Luke 19:47-48**  
**June 3, 2012**

Most of us have seen Verizon's commercial about their cell phone service. I think it's still being used. It features a guy in a grey uniform who shows up in different parts of the world armed with a Verizon cell phone in his hand and the Verizon company is symbolically standing behind him. He always asks the same question, "**Can you hear me now?**"

The point of this commercial is simple: "**Yes, thanks to our wonderful cell phone service and technology, you can be clearly heard all over the world. Sign up today!**"

I wish listening to other people . . . and to God was that easy.

Did you hear about the two psychiatrists who got together at their 20th college reunion? One was youthful looking, full of life, and happy while the other one looked tired, burned out, and run down. "**So what's your secret?**" the tired looking psychiatrist asked. "**For twenty years, I've been listening to other people's problems every day, all day long, and it's made me into a tired, old man.**"

The younger looking psychiatrist replied, "**Well, that's your problem. You actually listen to other people?**"

I think there's a difference between hearing and listening. We can hear someone talking, but that doesn't mean we're listening.

A mother told her eight-year-old daughter to clean up her room . . . at least five times. Finally, a few hours later, the room was still a mess. "**Honey,**" the mother said, "**I thought I told you to pick up your room.**"

The daughter said, "**I'm sorry mom. I wasn't listening.**" She heard, but she didn't listen. Do you see the difference?

Listening is hard to do for some of us. Maybe you know someone who doesn't listen very well. Maybe that person is sitting next to you!

Former president Franklin D. Roosevelt detested long receiving lines at the White House. He'd complain that no one really paid any attention to what was being said during these receiving lines.

One day, during a reception, he decided to try an experiment. As people were walking down the line shaking his hand, he whispered to each one, "*I murdered my grandmother this morning.*"

The guests all smiled and responded with phrases like, "*Marvelous! Keep up the good work. Were proud of you. God bless you, sir.*" It wasn't until the end of the line, while greeting the ambassador from Bolivia, that someone actually listened to him. Calmly, the ambassador leaned over and whispered, "*I'm sure she had it coming, Sir.*"

Are you a good listener? How many times have you had to apologize to your spouse or friend or someone because your mind was someplace else when they were talking to you? You heard the words, but you weren't paying attention . . . you didn't listen.

Some unknown husband put it this way, "**My wife said I never listen to her. At least, I think that's what she said.**" Are you guilty?

The Bible is full of people who practiced the art of listening. In our passage today from I Kings, we heard about two people who listened.

Elijah was a prophet. A prophet is someone who speaks for God. God sent Elijah to Zarephath in Sidon. God told him to find a certain widow who would feed him. Elijah listened and he obeyed God. He found the widow, but Sidon was also in the middle of a drought. Food and water were scarce. Plus, she had a son to feed and all she had left was a little bit of flour and a little bit of oil. The widow was barely surviving.

Elijah, with more guts than me, asked her to bring him some water and . . . some bread.

You can almost hear the desperation in the widow's voice. "**Look,**" she replied. "**I don't have any bread. All I have left is a handful of flour and a little oil in a jar. I was planning on using the flour and oil to make one last meal for me and my son before we die. And yet, you have the nerve to ask me to make you some bread?**"

What would you do? The widow and her son were starving. Death was knocking at their door. She could have told Elijah to drop dead and find his own bread. But, she didn't. She listened to Elijah. She obeyed and because she did obey, God blessed her. Her flour and oil never ran out.

The Bible is full of people who listened. Abraham listened and God blessed him with a land flowing with milk and honey. Joseph listened and God used him to save the Jewish people from starvation. David listened and he became Israel's greatest king. The Apostles listened and they followed Jesus.

And Jesus listened. God told him to take the sins of the world to the top of Calvary's hill. God said, **“On that hill, I want you to die on a cross for the forgiveness of sins.”** Jesus listened to God. He obeyed.

What about you and God? Do you ever listen . . . really listen to God's voice? Or, does God's voice get lost in all the hustle and bustle of our daily living?

One day, a parishioner was in the hospital. He was dying. The pastor said he heard God's voice telling him to *‘go and see him and to be God's presence to him’*, but the pastor didn't listen. He put it off and the person died. He should have listened.

Do you see how it works? God's voice might be soft and quiet, but it's always our choice whether we listen or not.

Eva Hart was a Titanic survivor. On April 15, 1912, she was on the Titanic when it hit an iceberg that tore a 300 foot gash into the side of the boat. After two hours and forty minutes, the Titanic sank 12,000 feet to the bottom of the Atlantic ocean.

The Titanic had twenty lifeboats . . . far fewer than required. They were all launched, but sadly most of them were only part-way filled. Many of the passengers ended up dying in the icy water while those in the lifeboats waited a safe distance away.

Eva Hart was in Lifeboat No. 14. It was the only lifeboat that went back after the Titanic sank from sight. The people on that lifeboat heard people crying out for help. They listened to that voice within and managed to save a few.

Eva Hart said later, **“while people were drowning in the icy, black waters, the other lifeboats were determined to stay dry and make certain no one rocked their boat.”**

Hearing voices cry out for help is one thing, listening and responding to them is another thing.

Have you ever had a neighbor who needed some help and you heard a voice telling you to do something. Did you listen? Have you known someone at your work who was struggling with a problem and you heard a voice telling you that you might be their solution? Did you listen? Have you ever gotten into an argument with your spouse or friend and you're tempted to say something mean and nasty, but you hear a voice telling you not to say it. Did you listen? Have you ever thought about volunteering at your church because you heard a voice asking you to volunteer? Did you listen?

Listening *well* is hard to do. Listening well to God is even harder to do. Yet, God continues to try. Everyday, in many different ways, God calls out your name and mine, asking

us to do something or say something that might make the world around us a better place.

**“Can you hear me now,”** God asks us again and again?

You and I might be God’s answer to someone’s problem today if we listen. We might be the one God chooses to make our world a little better today if we listen. We might be the one God needs to be his presence in this world today if we listen.

The question is this, **“Can you hear God now?”**