

**Sermon Notes and Discussion Questions**  
**Sermon Title: No More Noise – John 18:33-40**  
**Sunday, November 25, 2018**  
**Pastor Howard T. Washington**

We live in a world of division and distractions. God's kingdom is not of this realm. We need God's voice. We need God's Word.

This Thanksgiving Pastor Washington played a new game called "Hearing Things", the lip reading challenge. It is a Hasbro game that appears to be taken from the online viral "Whisper Challenge." In the "Hearing Things Game", one player must guess what their teammate is saying by reading their lips. The player who will be reading lips puts on the noise cancelling headphones so that he or she cannot hear what is being said. The headphones play all kinds of voices to prevent the player from hearing the phrase that the other player on your team is speaking. Pastor said, "It was challenging and quite fun to try to read the lips of his teammate." I could give clues, but I had a hard time reading lips. Many times when we are trying to hear what God is saying to us we are hearing noise.

When playing the game, I was instantly amazed at the similarities between the game and hearing God. God is speaking clearly, but we are distracted. Can you imagine what it is like? Note: The congregation was asked to start reading from the bulletin all at once.

Many of us are trying to hear God through the "voices" of the world around us. These "voices" produce distractions that keep us from hearing that "still small voice from God".

God is speaking clearly, but we have a hearing problem. And because of the hearing problems we end up living with a truth problem. God speaks through his Word, our circumstances and people He has sent to us. He even speaks through our dreams. The issue is not God. The issue is "How are we hearing?" We struggle because he wants us to listen, be what we are hearing is noise.

God is usually trying to guide us with simple instructions, yet we are distracted by the many voices that are in our ear and we struggle with listening to God because of the "God voice cancelling" culture.

Jesus said many times, "He who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit is saying." Matthew 11:15; 13:9; 13:43; Mark 4:9

John 18 describes the scene when Jesus is before Roman Governor Pilate at the request of the Jewish leaders who falsely accused Jesus of treason, among other things, in order to secure his crucifixion. It seemed Pilate was trying to do the right thing. He came up with some ideas for Jesus to be freed. He asked, "What is the truth?" The voices shouting at him were loud.

Although Pilate could find no fault in Jesus, he followed the wishes of the crowd to crucify Him.

God speaks truth to us, we must listen beyond the distractions to hear His voice.

In this text, we find Pilate seeking the Truth. He asks, "What is the truth?" In order to live beyond the noise:

1. Listen beyond the distractions to discover the truth.
2. Good leaders are good listeners.

Sometimes because we hear something over and over, it must be right. Even Pilate's wife suggested to him that he needed to back up from this request. He gave in to what the culture wanted. Everything we hear comes through the culture and it is filtered. God still wants to speak truth to us.

Sermon in a Sentence: We must listen beyond the distractions.

Sometimes our "own voice" is a distraction. We do not know what to say and we just keep talking. Sometimes silence is the best course of action. We can be our own distraction.

Listening is an art. It is a skill that most of us are not born with. It is a talent that takes time to develop and grow. Many people have a form of personal behavior that does not listen at all. Instead of listening to what is being said to them they are in the process of thinking what they are going to say themselves before the speaker is even finished. I hear you talking to me, but I am not listening because my point is more important to me. Ernest Hemingway said about listening, "I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Many people never listen."

John Maxwell used a tool by Stephen Ash to assess a listener's skills. Here is a great checklist to determine if you have the skill of listening.

### **Am I a Good Listener?**

Give yourself four points if the answer to the following questions is Always; three points for Usually; two points for Rarely; and one point for Never.

- \_\_\_ Do I allow the speaker to finish without interrupting?
- \_\_\_ Do I listen "between the lines"; that is, for the subtext?
- \_\_\_ When writing a message, do I listen for and write down the key facts and phrases?
- \_\_\_ Do I repeat what the person just said to clarify the meaning?
- \_\_\_ Do I avoid getting hostile and/or agitated when I disagree with the speaker?
- \_\_\_ Do I tune out distractions when listening?
- \_\_\_ Do I make an effort to seem interested in what the other person is saying?

2. Pursue your purpose in the midst of your process. Pursue what God has determined as your process. Your process was designed to get to your purpose. Don't get discouraged by the process. Sometimes the distraction is that we did not know what was coming. God will never let you forget your purpose and the plan for your life. Seek God's guidance and wisdom for your purpose.
  1. The process will bring twists and turns, familiar and unfamiliar voices, comfort and discomfort.
  2. Do not be disappointed or discouraged by detours, dead ends or delays.
  3. God will use dead ends, detours and delays to remind you of your God-given purpose. If you are not sure, begin to ask God to clearly show you in your present circumstances.
3. Those who love the truth will recognize the source and voice of truth. Everyone who is of the truth, hear his voice. If you love Jesus as your personal Savior, Jesus will draw you to the truth. Don't allow other people to project the truth on you. Know the difference between someone trying to hurt you with a dagger and what God says about me. God says, "I know the plans I have for you." Jeremiah 29:11a
  1. Jesus said, "My sheep know my voice."
  2. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."
  3. Jesus said, "The truth shall make you free."

Wake up and take off the headphones. This is not a game. Our lives are being changed by what we listen to. When you have spent time in the presence of God, God's spirit will work within you to check those things that are said that are not of God. Shut down the noise. You get to choose what you listen to.

Pilate had the ability to stop the noise. Instead, he wanted to be liked. Listen to song by Brian Courtney Wilson called "Noise."

**Discussion Questions:**

1. When was the last time in prayer you did more listening than talking? When was the last time you just listened during your prayer time?
2. What can we learn from Pilate's example about listening to God?
3. After completing the listening assessment, what actions will you take to become a better listener?
4. Listening was described as an investment in the people you are communicating with. How does this statement impact your relationships with others?
5. Discuss a time when God used circumstances to get you where he wanted you to be?
6. How much are you listening to God compared to everything else you may be listening to?

Make your gift to God during this Christmas season your undivided attention. Listen to Him.