

LISTENING ALONGSIDE



ECHOING CHRIST

Lenten Devotions 2017

**Thursday,
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By Deborah Wright

God has gifted us with many beautiful sounds in nature, and "listening alongside" these sounds often causes me to be still, to know, and to pray. There is such comfort in the rhythmic sound of waves, the rolling rumbles of thunder, the quietness of a mountain morning, or the chirping, buzzing, humming, and croaking of a creature choir at dusk and dawn. These past two months, however, I've spent a good bit of time "listening alongside" the anxiety-producing sounds of a hospital. Sounds of sirens and elevator doors, heart monitors and blood pressure cuffs, unfamiliar voices of doctors, nurses, and technicians.

After my mom's recent fall, Jody and I huddled together in her hospital room, whispering our fears and concerns while Mama tried to sleep. We were all tired and overwhelmed, but as we have time and again, we prayed for God's peace and presence. Our prayers were interrupted by the ring of my cell phone, which proved to be the answer to our prayers.

Robert, Lenka, Savannah, and Holly were on the other end of that FaceTime call. A quiet hospital room suddenly filled with the squeals of a six month old and the chattering of a two year old. Savannah's new favorite game is hide and seek, and while Jody was visiting with Savannah, all of a sudden she darted away from the phone screen and shouted, "Come find me, Ganpa!" She ran to a corner, put a pillow in front of her face, and giggled with glee as Ganpa "looked" everywhere for her. Once he'd "find" Savannah, she'd race off again to a new destination, calling out, "Come find me, Ganpa!" Soon Jody and I were caught up in Savannah's excitement and laughter. God gifted us with the sounds of our granddaughters when we needed them most.

God was with us while we waited in that hospital room. We did not have to search for him . . . he never left our side. We just needed to listen carefully for his voice. Sometimes God's voice comes to us in the familiar sounds of nature and sometimes in an unexpected game of hide and seek.

Prayer

Like the joy of the sea coming home to shore,
May the relief of laughter rinse through your soul.

As the wind loves to call things to dance,
May your gravity be lightened by grace.

Like the dignity of moonlight restoring the earth,
May your thoughts incline with reverence and respect.

As water takes whatever shape it is in,
So free may you be about who you may become.

As silence smiles on the other side of what's said,
May your sense of irony bring perspective.

As time remains free of all that it frames,
May your mind stay clear of all its names.

May your prayer of listening deepen enough
To hear in the depths the laughter of God.

—John O'Donohue

From *To Bless the Space Between Us*

Psalm 17:6

I have called upon You, for You will answer me, O God;
Incline Your ear to me, hear my speech.

Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have relieved me in my distress;
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach?
How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? Selah.
But know that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself;
The Lord hears when I call to Him.

Tremble, and do not sin;
Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.
Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
And trust in the Lord.

Many are saying, "Who will show us any good?"
Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O Lord!
You have put gladness in my heart,
More than when their grain and new wine abound.
In peace I will both lie down and sleep,
For You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety.

I Corinthians 2:1-16

And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written,

"Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard,
And which have not entered the heart of man,
All that God has prepared for those who love Him."

For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.