

SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 2024

SPEAK, LORD, YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING

1 SAMUEL 3:1–20

God Is Still Speaking

So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then [Eli] said, "It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him."

1 Samuel 3:18

Samuel's first prophetic message from God is not good news for Eli. Prophetic oracles of the biblical text are rarely easy to hear. They are often warnings of impending judgments or rebukes of injustices and immorality. But Eli's response to his own condemnation is admirable. He doesn't get angry at Samuel for relaying the word of God. He submits to the truth and accepts what it means for him and his household. Even when cursed, Eli knows how to hear the word of God.

Eli and Samuel invite us to reflect on the prophets in our culture as a spiritual practice. Who are the prophetic voices in our society? What is our response to their messages? What does it mean to listen to God's voice for us today?



Lord, help me to discern and hear the voices of your modern prophets. Amen.

Zeena Regis, Decatur, Georgia

SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2024

LISTENING TO GOD
1 SAMUEL 8:4–20

God Knows Best

But the people refused to listen.

1 Samuel 8:19a

God, through Samuel, warned the Israelites that having a king would lead to suffering. Nonetheless, the people demanded a king. While God was clear about what this would mean for the Israelites, God chose to give them what they wanted. That choice was both a warning and a gift.

The warning might be, “Be careful what you wish for.” God might not prevent us from making bad choices. Therefore, we must listen. We must pray, study, and strive to discern what God knows is best for us.

The gift is that God is not an overbearing parent who controls our lives despite our wishes. God wants genuine relationships with us, so God considers our hopes and desires. Then, when we find that what we wanted was not in our best interest, God is still with us to hold us, help us stand again, and encourage us to make better choices the next time.



Help me to hear your call and follow. Amen.

Barbara Barkley, Clayton, California

MONDAY, JUNE 3, 2024

LISTENING TO GOD
PSALM 138

God Hears Us

*On the day I called, you answered me;
you increased my strength of soul.*

Psalm 138:3

God hears and answers our prayers. Still, sometimes the answer is no, which can be painful to hear.

When my family was in crisis, our daily prayer of “take this from us” was repeatedly answered with “No. You will have to walk through this.” While we did not like that answer, being heard provided great comfort. God was the one we could talk to with complete openness and honesty. God was always there to listen.

Being heard also helped us clear our thoughts so that we could hear both God and others better, making it easier to discern how to move forward.

Finally, being heard, as the psalmist says, increases our strength of soul. When we consistently felt the love of God present to hear and answer, we were strengthened for the journey, even when the answer to our prayers was no.



*Loving God, thank you for hearing and answering
our prayers. Amen.*

Barbara Barkley, Clayton, California

LISTENING TO GOD
GENESIS 3:8–15

God's Invitation to Relationship

But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

Genesis 3:9

Why did God ask the man, "Where are you?" Even when I know the answers, I still ask my children to tell me about their day. When I know they have done something wrong, I still ask them to tell me, in their own words, what it was and why.

God wants to engage with us. God's question is an invitation to conversation, an invitation to relationship.

"Where are you?" is more than a question of location. Where are you, Adam, in your thinking? Where are you in your feelings? Where are you in your decision to hide? While God may already know the answers to these questions, the questions themselves help Adam understand himself better too. Sometimes it is the questions that help us to know ourselves best. This knowledge helps us grow in our connections to ourselves, others, and God.



Gracious God, thank you for inviting us into relationship with you. Amen.

Barbara Barkley, Clayton, California

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5, 2024

LISTENING TO GOD
PSALM 130

Waiting for the Lord

*I wait for the LORD; my soul waits,
and in his word I hope.*

Psalm 130:5

Generally, we don't wait well. We download movies and books, message instantly, and obtain food from drive-throughs.

Yet waiting brings gifts. We learn to hope. We learn to listen more fully as we wait for God to come to us anew. We are challenged by the call to wait, to stop worrying, and to just be. Waiting asks us to take time to be still, to savor moments in which there is nothing else to do. Waiting invites us to ignore our phones and computers and our to-do lists. "Be still, and know that I am God!" (46:10).

If we never take the time to be still, to wait, how will we know God? God's time is not our time, and God will not cater to our desires for instant gratification.

Meet God in the waiting. God waits for you.



*Help my soul to wait for you and to hope in your word.
Amen.*

Barbara Barkley, Clayton, California

THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 2024

LISTENING TO GOD
PSALM 130

Listening versus Talking

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.

Psalm 130:1

There are times of struggle when all we can do is cry out to God. We cry from the depths of our soul, praying for God to save us from despair. We trust that God hears us and answers. But often, we do more talking than listening for God's answers.

In my congregation, we have added moments of silence to our prayers so that after the speaking, we have space to listen for God. Still, these moments of corporate silence are uncomfortable for many and are often shortened. Do we cut silence out of our personal prayer time as well? Do we become impatient in the quiet, wondering if we are wasting our time? Do we desire to keep talking as thoughts arise rather than listening?

God invites our prayers and wants to hear what we have to say. But in our relationship with God, we need to listen too.



God, open my ears to hear you. Amen.

Barbara Barkley, Clayton, California

FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 2024

LISTENING TO GOD

MARK 3:20–35

The Uncontrollable God

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

Mark 3:24

Jesus healed, cast out demons, and taught. In response, his family declared him crazy. The legal experts said he was possessed by Beelzebul. But, as Jesus said, Satan can't cast out Satan. Still, the people were afraid. They assigned explanations and cast judgments to make sense of and control what they could not understand.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, C. S. Lewis's Jesus character is Aslan, the lion. Asked if Aslan was safe, Mr. Beaver responded, "Course he isn't safe. But he's good."* Jesus, too, was not safe, but he was good. His work to cast out demons should have demonstrated that. When God acts in ways we don't expect, we are invited to name what we don't understand and strive to trust in God's goodness rather than trying to control God with labels or explanations.

Rest in God's unending grace.



Uncontrollable God, help me to trust in you and rest in your love. Amen.

Barbara Barkley, Clayton, California

* C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (New York: Collier Books, 1979), 75–76

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 2024

LISTENING TO GOD

MARK 3:20–35

We Belong to One Another

And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?”

Mark 3:33

Jesus invites us to be part of the beloved community. In this community, we remember that we belong to one another. What injures one of us hurts all of us. What builds up one of us enriches us all.

This can be a difficult message. Society encourages us to care for ourselves and our families while rejecting those who are needy. But Jesus’ message is clear: if we want to be part of Jesus’ family, we are to do the will of God. The will of God is to love one another by feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, and visiting and caring for the sick and imprisoned (Matt. 25:31–46). It is in so doing that we will come to know Jesus in “the least of these” (v. 40) and will become part of his family.



*Thank you, God, for calling me to be part of your family.
Amen.*

Barbara Barkley, Clayton, California

SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2024

GOD'S AMAZING ABUNDANCE

1 SAMUEL 15:34–16:13

God's Vision

“The LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

1 Samuel 16:7b

We judge others based on many things: looks, charisma, wealth, education, status. But God sees into our hearts. Those whom God chooses for a call is often different than we expect.

At one church I served, we needed someone to organize a fundraiser for our feeding program. The person who enthusiastically volunteered was not whom we expected. I could hear the collective groan as we agreed that since he was the only one volunteering, we would support his leadership. It was not long before we acknowledged the amazing job and clear giftedness of this person for this task.

We can rejoice in the knowledge that sometimes God picks us for opportunities others may not consider right for us. With God's call empowering us, we will find the strength, wisdom, and grace to fulfill those ministries.



Thank you, God, for calling us to do your work. Amen.

Barbara Barkley, Clayton, California

MONDAY, JUNE 10, 2024

GOD'S AMAZING ABUNDANCE
EZEKIEL 17:22-24

All Will Know

*All the trees of the field shall know
that I am the LORD.*

Ezekiel 17:24a

God's goodness is so great that God produces amazing abundance in the life that surrounds us. The variety of plants and animals that exist is astounding. The ability of life to flourish in the most inhospitable environments is miraculous. Where we see destruction, such as in the aftermath of a fire, God can spring forth new growth in an amazingly short time.

While we often focus most on God's love for humans, God's care for all creation extends beyond our imaginings. Is it any surprise, then, that "all the trees of the field" shall know God?

God's love of all creation is an invitation to us to celebrate the abundance of God made manifest in the diversity of species. It is also a call to us to take care of the world we inhabit. It is truly God's beloved creation.



Thank you, God, for your glorious creation! Amen.

Barbara Barkley, Clayton, California

TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2024

GOD'S AMAZING ABUNDANCE

PSALM 20

Our Heart's Desire

*May he grant you your heart's desire
and fulfill all your plans.*

Psalm 20:4

Sometimes the dreams of our childhood remain unfulfilled. Many of these are unrealistic. For other dreams, life intervenes and prevents us from pursuing them. As we grow, our dreams can change, yet they are no less meaningful to us.

Our dreams are windows into our heart. Each speaks to us about deeper yearnings that God has placed within us. Are we seeking to be loved? Desiring meaningful work? Hoping to make a difference? Wanting to express our creativity? The tug on our heart tells us whom God is calling us to be. God helps us fulfill our heart's desires, though maybe not in the ways we originally imagine. We are called to listen to God's urgings as we strive to find our path forward. In so doing, we will be amazed to see the ways God moves through our lives to grant our heart's desires.



Thank you, God, for the dreams of my heart. Amen.

Barbara Barkley, Clayton, California

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2024

GOD'S AMAZING ABUNDANCE
PSALM 92:1-4, 12-15

God Delights in You!

*For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing for joy.*

Psalm 92:4

The psalmists proclaim their delight in God. We, too, express our joy in the abundant and glorious works of God. What we perhaps celebrate less often is that this joy and delight is mutual. It is not only that we delight in God but also that God delights in us.

God created us to love one another and to live out that love in service to God and God's people. But God also created us to delight in this glorious and beautiful world that God made. When we take time to truly appreciate this wondrous world, it fills God with joy as well. We please God by taking time to notice the gifts that surround us: family, friends, nature, music, art. Give God thanks for each day that we have breath to breathe.



*Loving God, thank you for this amazing life. May
our lives give delight to you. Amen.*

Barbara Barkley, Clayton, California

THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 2024

GOD'S AMAZING ABUNDANCE

MARK 4:26-34

The Awe of God's Creation

And the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.

Mark 4:27b

Creation is amazing. While there is scientific understanding about our world, there is still great mystery in our universe. Why does science work the way it does? Why does the universe exist? For what reason? While science strives to answer the question of how, our faith seeks to answer the questions of why and for what purpose.

Why does science work the way it does? Because God set the rules of science into motion out of God's deep and abiding love for creation. Why does the universe exist? Because God's loving nature could not help but create, and because God desires connection in all that is created. God's abundant creation is bountiful and marvelous. Our invitation to relationship with God is wondrous. Our inclusion in God's loving creation is reason to rejoice each day. The invitation to delight in the world we inhabit is present in each breath we take.



Thank you, God, for loving me into being. Amen.

Barbara Barkley, Clayton, California

GOD'S AMAZING ABUNDANCE
MARK 4:26–34

Miraculous Growth

“Yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

Mark 4:32

As God grows a tiny, insignificant seed into a shrub capable of providing space and shade for the nests of birds, what can God do with each of us?

Many of society's true heroes were people who grew up in poor and underserved communities and yet became amazing leaders. For example, Abraham Lincoln was born into poverty, was self-educated, and became what many consider the greatest president in U.S. history. He led the United States through the Civil War and promoted the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery.

What do we allow God to do in our lives? We may feel small, but with God on our side, we, too, can grow to provide shelter for God's precious souls.



*God, help me grow into the one you call me to be.
Amen.*

Barbara Barkley, Clayton, California

