

*Let anyone with ears listen.*

30 years ago very early on a Sunday morning I was on the top of Mt Sinai --- went up to see sunrise. But instead of seeing the beauty of the sun appearing gradually on all the mountain peaks around I saw nothing but thick swirling mist. There was a howling gale and torrential rain, thunder and lightening and it was cold.

I had gone to find God in the beauty of the sunrise but God did not seem to be there.

Gradually it began to get light – still no sun but enough light to be guided back down the mountain.

As I descended in the wind and the rain, every so often I stopped to rest --- not just to rest but to absorb the atmosphere.

And I realized that God had been there all the time.

It was I who had been so distracted with the thunder that I did not notice.

God was there in the thunder and lightening but it was in the stillness that I became aware of his Presence.. In the stillness – for this was a desert mountain and the desert has a special stillness of its own – a stillness where the only way I can describe it is “you can hear the silence”

The thunder roared, the lightening flashed and the wind howled, but in between it was still and silent.

I was alone with the Lord on this holy mountailn. And I thought of the words of Jacob ‘How awesome is this place!

My fellow pilgrims had disappeared in front of me and others hadn’t caught up, so all around me was this holy mountain and not a single person to interrupt the awesome presence of God.

It was so moving to be where thousands of years earlier Moses had stood on this same mountain , he too, in thunder and lightening and a dense cloud.

And God was there with Moses and God spoke to Moses. Moses heard God's word and LISTENED

Then years later Elijah was on the mountain – and he experienced the wind, an earthquake and fire.

But God did not speak to Elijah in the wind, the earthquake or the fire. Instead he spoke in a still small voice, or as more modern translations say “ a sound of sheer silence.

Why, then, the thunder and the lightening --- the fire of the burning bush, and much later, the wind and flames of Pentecost?

Often, more than often God needs to attract our attention

We need to see his power, his majesty portrayed in the drama of nature. We need some dramatic event to make us sit up and take notice, before we stop still and listen.

God appears and speaks in the thunder, earthquake, wind and fire, ----- but we need to stop and listen to hear his voice.

It is when we are still that God has a chance to get a word in.

Well, what has this got to do with today's gospel? --- the parable off the Sower?

Jesus says '*Let anyone with ears listen*'.

Listen – Are you a HEARER or a LISTENER?

There is a difference.

In most Anglican churches this morning the Gospeller will say 'Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ'. But in Amblecote we say (that is if I remember) 'LISTEN to the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Now I'm willing to bet that each one of you heard the gospel this morning. You heard words being said --- but did you actually LISTEN.

For listening means giving one's attention to what is being said. Listen implies paying heed and taking notice.

During these heatwaves how often do we hear of someone losing their life because they jumped into a cold lake to cool off. They heard it was dangerous but they did not listen.

Jesus wants us to LISTEN to the word of God. We can be of no use if God's word falls on deaf ears.. And neither can we be of much use if we don't ponder over it and don't let it sink into our minds. Then there are times when we hear and listen but let other worldly things take over and we either ignore or forget what God wants from us.

Jesus wants listeners who spend time being still, so they know what the Lord wants from them and then act upon it.

So often we hear Christians saying 'God never speaks to me.

But he does. We can be so busy in our prayer time telling God about the troubles in the world, giving details about someone's illness, and so on. But God knows this already. He doesn't want to hear us going on and on. What he wants is to be able to get a word in edgeways. He wants us to be still, quiet and LISTEN. And then we might hear the still small voice.

Some time ago I rang up a certain person to tell her about some meeting about to take place. But this person went on and on talking and every time I tried to say something she talked over me and continued going on and on. Eventually the call ended and I never got a chance to say why I had rung. About a week later she complained that no one had informed her of the meeting and she was rather peeved at missing it.

So often that is what we are like with God.

God wants his words to fall on good soil,.He wants his people to take time away from the hustle and bustle of life, and give their full attention to him.

‘Be still and know that I am God’ are his words to the Psalmist and also to us.

We must listen to that still, small voice and stop dashing about thinking we are doing the will of God.

Instead we must stop still for a while – stop and listen – even in the thunder of present day living.

When I was on Mount Sinai, I only became aware of God when I stopped. The thunder was still there, but when I stopped I was able to hear God, not in the thunder but THROUGH the thunder.

We too will hear God amidst the thunder of our daily lives, when we stop and LISTEN. – so instead of going along with the thunder, the earthquakes of daily living, just stop for a while.

Be still , still in the presence of the Lord.

Let the Lord’s words sink into our minds and stay firmly rooted and acted upon so just as one tiny seed can multiply and grow, so can God’s word spread to others, spreading the Gospel to all who will LISTEN.

And then, as God said to Isaiah, ‘my word shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing in which I sent it.’

Let anyone with ears LISTEN

LISTEN to the words of the Lord.

Don’t just hear but LISTEN