

Alive in Us
Spring Into Summer Meditation, May 3rd, 2020
Eli'jah Carroll

Today in our scripture passage, we are asked to listen for God's voice, to keep God's message in our hearts, to keep God's goals as our goals. And, we should keep this message in plain view at all times. To concentrate! And Learn it by heart!

But wait, what does God's voice sound like? How can we know God's message if we don't know what they sound like? How do we know what God's goals are? How can we concentrate and learn God's goals by heart if we are unsure what that is?

This is a kind of question that you; the children and youth ask often. I've heard you ask it as I visit with your classes on Sunday mornings, or during Confirmation retreats. I remember one Sunday in particular when I visited our 5th graders, we had a whole class time just on how we define God. It's important to know what God is in order to be able to hear God's voice or to know what God's message is.

Let's talk about Proverbs for a moment. It's a book in the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament. It's said that King Solomon wrote a bunch of wisdom down. We know that wisdom writing to be the book of Proverbs. It's actually more likely to be an anthology. Or, a collection—or a group of things that are in common or go good together. AND, Proverbs was more likely to be written by a bunch of people and not just Solomon. Proverbs is a collection of teachings about family, community, and social justice topics like how to be a good neighbor to those in need, among other things. Proverbs

presents an ideal—or, if the ancient Israelites lived in a perfect world, Proverbs would be the guidepost. There are also some really weird parts to Proverbs! But we are just going to focus on the tiny piece from chapter 4 today. Really, Proverbs is a good stop on the, “how might we define God” bus. Let’s hear the scripture passage again:

“Dear friend, listen well to my words;
tune your ears to my voice.
Keep my message in plain view at all times.
Concentrate! Learn it by heart!
Those who discover these words live, really live;
body and soul.
Keep vigilant watch over your heart;
that’s where life starts.
Keep your eyes straight ahead;
ignore all sideshow distractions.
Watch your step,
and the road will stretch out before you.
Look neither right nor left;
leave evil in the dust.” (Prov. 4: 20-27, Message Translation)

So, if this scripture is part of the stop on the “defining God bus”, let’s talk about what we are listening for since this passage is really telling us to listen for God’s voice. Let me give you an example of how I hear God’s voice.

I hear God’s voice ringing down the education wing each week with your laughter. I hear God’s voice in the important prayers from the 5th grade room weekly. I hear God’s voice booming in study room one with the excitement of a group of 6/7th graders that love being together. I hear God’s voice in the questions about our bodies in the 8th Grade OWL room. I hear God’s voice ring out in silent contemplation in the youth room as bright young minds discern their weeks and those moments that feel important to

note with a group of 20 of you all together. I hear God's voice in the attempted whispers from tiny bodies in the children's corner in the sanctuary. I hear God's voice preaching a sermon in melody to the congregation that God is still speaking—or to do justice, have mercy, show kindness, walk humbly with our God, in the collective energy of our youth choir.

I see God moving in our children doing fundraisers to help those that need food in our greater community. I see God moving in the toddles of tiny feet playing in the childcare room. I see God leading us through our young people that are protesting for cleaner energy— or protesting for queer rights. I see God moving in our youth who travel to the border to witness the inhumane treatment of immigrants. If we are asked to listen for God's voice and keep God's goals as ours, all we have to do is listen to one another—that is when our words are those of Love—Joy—Justice—Expansiveness, or making a way for all— and to follow each other's lead—when we are leading folks toward doing justice, having mercy, and showing kindness, this is God at work. But, how can we listen to each other and follow each other's lead when we are physically not able to be together right now?

On Friday and yesterday, I took a great tour of the cities and a few of the suburbs. Every year, I give a little gift to those that volunteer with faith formation to show some appreciation for giving of their time and spiritual gifts to our children and youth. On my journeys, I saw so many Mayflower homes with "Blessed Ramadan" signs and "All Are Welcome" signs in their yards. I saw kind smiles and Mayflower families taking care of

each other. We had conversations about how we are doing during this time. They were honest stories of hope and doing their best during a difficult and unprecedented time. My journey the last two days was more than just giving a small token of appreciation. It was an opportunity to see how Mayflower is more than just building. We are the church. We are the church in Minnetonka—In St. Louis Park—In St. Paul, and Bloomington, and of course in Minneapolis. Just because we can't be physically together doesn't mean we don't remember who we are as a church. And, who we are as a church is an image and likeness of God—another way of seeing God in the world.

Though we aren't here together right now, I pray you feel connected through continuing to be God's love in the world. That's not to say that we don't have ways to be connected in a more immediate way. Continue to call one another. And, a lot of you live close by each other! Socially distanced walks are OK to do. Have watch party with one another on Facebook! Write letters to your senior friends. I know they would love to hear from you. These are lonely times and the letter you send to your senior friend might be just what they need.

This God thing. The thing we spend so much time thinking about. It's already right inside of you! Alive in us. Just take a moment to look at you—to look at each other, and all those moments of Love—of Joy—of reaching out to give Love, Joy, and Abundance to our neighbors. That's God—Alive in you—Alive in us! When you see it,

remember it! Honor it! Celebrate how God is alive and moving—is still speaking through this joyful community of youngsters. May it be so.