

A Whisper, A Shout

Scripture: Matthew 10:26 – 27

8/15/21

Listening really matters!

The wireless operator on the Carpathia, the first ship to arrive at the scene of the Titanic disaster, heard this message at 12:25 am on April 15th, 1912 from the Titanic. The message was – ‘Come at once! We have struck a berg!’ The Carpathia would go on to save 706 lives even though the SS Californian, a British steamship, was within the sight of the Titanic but its wireless operator had gone to bed for the night so he did not hear the distress call. Had he the distress call, perhaps many more lives would have been saved.

In the Senate hearing days later concerning the sinking of the Titanic, the Carpathia’s captain shared this – ‘The whole thing was absolutely providential, our wireless operator was in his cabin at the time, not on official business at all, but just simply listening as he was undressing. In ten minutes, he would have been in bed and we would have not heard the distress call!’

Listening matters – especially listening to God. In Psalm 85:8 – 9, the writer urges us to attentive and obedient to listening to God when he says – *I will listen to what God the Lord says. God promises peace to his people, his faithful servants. But let them not turn to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear God.*

When we listen to God by obeying his teachings, God will help us navigate even life’s most troubling waters.

I was taught at LTS (Lexington Theological Seminary) to preach this way – Every sermon ought to be based upon a biblical text. Get a text first then try to figure out what it says then preach it!

But as a preacher, I will let you in on something – I wish I could figure out not only what a text from the Bible says but also how a text from the Bible was said. How you say something can be as important as what you say. How you say a thing can be the thing that was said. It's quite confusing huh?

Trouble is, we can not know how Jesus said what he said. We have got the words, fixed and lying on a page, but we do not know how he said what he said. The meaning of words is more than that. How you say something becomes that which is said.

In so many Biblical passages I wish I knew how Jesus said what he said. Did he have a smile in his voice? Where his nostrils flared what he said what he said? Was the pitch of his voice raised or lowered when he said what he said?

In the Holy Land some years ago. I went to the supposed site where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount. Our tour guide asked us if Jesus would have stood on the side of the hill with the wind at his back or in his face. What do you think?

The answer is – Jesus would have stood with the wind at his back so that the wind could carry his words out on to the people.

I know this for sure – Sometimes Jesus shouted and sometimes he whispered. But when did he shout or when did he whisper? His truth was the sort of truth that required modulation. Jesus wanted people to hear him. He had to talk loud enough and clear enough so that they heard. But there is that truth that must be delivered with care. These truths need not to be shouted but given with a whisper.

Do you know that a whisper can become a shout and a shout can become a whisper?

(I will read scripture passage Matthew 10:26 – 27)

Jesus said: *Therefore, do not be afraid of those people because nothing is hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing secret that will not be brought out into the open. What I say to you in the darkness, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, announce from the rooftops.*

(Read passage again and whisper it)

Jesus said: *Therefore, do not be afraid of those people because nothing is hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing secret that will not be brought out into the open. What I say to you in the darkness, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, announce from the rooftops.*

(Read passage again and shout it)

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A friend of mine is a retired minister living in Kansas and he told me this story:

A minister boarded a plane on the West Coast heading for home. He settled into his seat which was a middle seat and he was joined by another man in the aisle seat. The man was well dressed in a conservative suit. The minister thought to himself – I hope this man is not some intrusive chatter-box and for this long flight, the minister hoped he would let him out during the flight to use the restroom.

The man in the isle seat immediately took out a book and stuck his nose in it so the minister prepared himself for a solitary flight. Once in the air the minister noticed that the man next to him

had pulled out a Bible, a pen, and some paper. The man began taking some notes from the Bible.

The minister thought to himself – Oh Great! A long flight and I am next to some kind of religious nut. If he finds out that I am a minister, I am dead! I will keep my eyes on my book and maybe he will not discover me out.

The man next to the minister hardly looked up for some time during the flight. For an hour he was still hard at work taking notes from his Bible. Out of the corner of the minister's eye, he checked him out. He did not look like a nut. He looked normal. Why was a normal looking person like that studying the Bible?

Meals came and were served. The minister finally glanced at the man. He just began to eat while still reading the Bible.

The minister finally spoke up because his curiosity got the best of him – *I have noticed that you are reading the Bible.* The man answered – *Yes* – and that was all he said and he returned to reading the Bible and taking notes. After a few minutes the minister tried to begin a conversation, he said – *I found that interesting that you are reading your Bible and taking notes.* The man answered – *Do you?* – And he again returned to reading and taking notes from his Bible.

The minister began to become some what disturbed so he talked to the man again – *I find that interesting because I enjoy reading the Bible. I love the story in the Bible and you seem to be studying it very intensely! Why?* The man answered with a touch of aggravation – *I am a Sunday school teacher for an adult class. I am working on my lesson for tomorrow.* The minister answered – *Really? Well, I read the Bible too. I am a minister myself.* The man said – *Good for you!* – And he resumed his work. The minister shared this with his congregation on the next day at church – *Now, that is an evangelist! That is how it ought to be done. Let us be absorbed in the faith until others beg to know what holds our attention. The man did not grab any one by the lapel and say – Let me tell you about Jesus. Sometimes a whisper is more dramatic than a shout!*

Today's message has another story, let me share another one:
A minister entered a hospital room. The patient named Kathy had just gotten a very tough diagnosis. Kathy was in bed with a box of Kleenex beside her and she was crying.

The minister who entered the room said – *Kathy, I had to come as soon as I heard the news. I am so very sorry!* – The minister moved toward Kathy gave her a great big embrace. Kathy asked the minister this – *How can you stand there, Sunday after Sunday and talk so piously about the goodness and love of God? Here I am, the mother of two children, in this situation. Where is this loving God?* For the next two hours the minister sat there in the room in silence with Kathy holding her hand. After the two hours, Kathy said – *I think now, I can go on.*

That minister's whisper became a shout. A whisper can be more noticed than a shout!

This week, I guarantee you that God will give you the opportunity to share what we have heard and read about God. This week, God will give you the opportunity to share by shouting about Jesus. This week, God will give you the opportunity to whisper about the love of Jesus.

So today, what you have heard in the dark, go out and tell in the light. And what Jesus has whispered to you in church, you are to shout from the rooftops.

You know, we do not do much shouting in church. In some churches, they shout. In Pentecostal churches they shout. It seems that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) think shouting is not a dignified thing to do.

Today I want you to sometime this week shout our scripture passage from Matthew. Would you do that for me? Pick a time when you will shout our scripture passage. You could do it in a crowd restaurant, sitting on your porch, in your living room or bedroom; but please pick a time to shout our scripture passage once this week.

Also today, I want you to personally hear these wonderful words so I am going to ask you to read the passage from Matthew in a whisper sometime this coming week so that only you and the person next to can hear it. Please pick a time when you will whisper these wonderful words from Jesus.

To do these two things you will need to look up our scripture passage – Matthew 10:26 – 27 and copy it down and you will need to figure out when to shout and whisper these wonderful words from Jesus –

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Let us pray:

Father, help us to stay close to You in our thoughts, our words, and our actions. Please use each of us as your servant to bring your hope to others.

O God, let us not be afraid of those people who will make fun of us for our faith in you. May your wonderful stories not remain hidden but may they be revealed through our words, deeds, and actions. Let nothing be a secret in our faith in Jesus. Let us bring our faith out into the open. May what we say in the darkness of our lives reflect your light. Let our whispers of love for you be announced from the rooftops. AMEN.