
LENT 2023
LISTEN
ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



The 1st Sunday of Lent
Finding Your Cave: Listening Spaces

Prelude

O Lord, Remember Me

Gathering—Come and rest. Come and listen. Lay the fullness of your lives before the Maker.

Music Refrain: *Come and Find the Quiet Center, #477, verse 1*
Come and find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead,
Find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:
Clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes, that we may see
All the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.

Sometimes we just need to get away in order to hear from that “still small voice” within. This quiet voice is an attribute of the Holy Living God, as the prophet Elijah found out when he retreated to a cave where he expected to experience God in big wind and earthquake and fire. What is your “cave?” What place—perhaps a park, a path, a rocking chair, a shoreline—and what practice—such as walking, journaling, reading, or making art—helps you get quiet enough for long enough so you can hear past the chaos and into the depths of your life? This Lent we will quiet things down and heighten our attention to the “still, small voice” of God and our own true self. Listening through prayer as well as meditation on sacred texts is an ancient Lenten practice. So, let us come and rest, come and listen. Let’s sing verse 2...

Music Refrain: *Come and Find the Quiet Center, #477, verse 2*
Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, touches base,
Making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,
Raising courage when we’re shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.

A Time of Prayer—Come, Holy Spirit, let us find our rest in you. As we begin this season of Lent, we step out of the fast-moving current of daily life. During this holy season, may we choose stillness over [chaos]; may we strive to listen rather

than to speak. Help us slow our pace and quiet our minds, that our spirits may draw closer to you. Bless our worship with your presence, and fill our minds with new wisdom, that we may rise with you at Easter and lift up others in your name...~

The Lord's Prayer (unison)—Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Bell Choir

Be Still, My Soul

Listening—During our worship this Lent, we are going to do some practice listening by turning inward to find God's still, small voice, as it is described in 1 Kings, in the story of Elijah. You are invited to sit quietly in the silence without any expectation of what you "ought" to be thinking. Don't worry about sounds from the cars rumbling outside or the heat kicking on—simply let them float into and out of your attention. And if you find it difficult to settle your thoughts, contemplate the following: *the reverberations at the end of the music...the spaces between the bird's call...the lull after the wind whips through the trees...the spaces "in between..."*

Silence

We Hear God's Word

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a (NRSV)

The scripture in this series will be done in an abridged "lectio divina" format—which means "divine reading." We will hear the scripture read once and then we will let that resonate for a bit. You can think about what words or phrases stood out to you. After a few moments, we will hear the scripture read again.

At that place [Elijah] came to a cave, and spent the night there...[The word of the Lord came to him and] said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice...

Meditation

“Finding Your Cave: Listening Spaces”

Hymn

Softly and Tenderly, 348

We Respond to God's Word with Our Giving

Invitation—God gives good things to us, so let us give good things to God. Let us bring gifts that can be like water in dry places. May these resources be used to testify to the goodness of God.+

February Benevolence—Southeast Association Eviction Ministry

A Story of Generosity—Pancake Brunch for Creative Spirit

Doxology

We Give Thanks— Divine One, receive our gifts from the open hearts from which we give them. Thank you for blessing us with gifts to share, so that good works can abound. We offer our gifts gladly. May what we give be used to meet the needs of all. Amen.+

Hymn

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise, 48

Benediction— And now as you move on into the world...Hold that which is happening on the outside AND the inside dear. Love what comes across your path for what it will teach you. Cherish the struggle that stirs in your gut for how it will guide you. And know that all people carry within them the Essence of the Divine—a Holy Wisdom—given at birth. Listen every day until we meet again. Get quiet enough to hear the still small voice and to find your own. And may the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be with you all. And all God’s people say, Amen.

Postlude

Cantique