

Pentecost

May 20, 2018

Trinity Church

One of my family members asked me a question recently that took some thought. She asked, “How does God know when you are talking to him?” Another way of asking the question might be, “Does God hear our individual prayers or are we just talking to ourselves?” These are logical questions. With seven billion people in the world thinking and praying in multiple languages, how do we know that God’s I-phone is

picking up our messages? It seems overwhelming that an intimate relationship with each of us can be carried on with so many voices speaking at the same time.

When we think of the interior voices talking to us in our minds and hearts, we may ask the same question of ourselves? “How do we know which voices to listen to within our own lives? Which voices come from fear and which come from love? Do we hear only what we want to hear or are we open to any answer?”

We can create a big web with these thoughts and become tangled

in the confusion. That's when we might become listeners for one another – to hear what is being said and to respond to what we are hearing. For inquirers, these responses can help them to hear what they are trying to say to themselves. We can be grateful for discernment. That, of course, is the method we use to sort out what's going on in our minds. If we have trouble sorting our interior voices, how do we know if what we hear is a response from God? Is the answer to my prayer a validation of the answer I want to hear? Or maybe it's not.

So how do we know that God hears our prayers?

If you are the Creator you can prepare for such uncertainties. As it is, God's DNA is within each of us. God is no further away from us than we are from ourselves. And sometimes when we are all mixed up with our thoughts, God is the one who is closer to us than we are to ourselves. This interior conversation with God is available because God dwells within each of us. We are not always able to hear a response to our prayers because the answer may not be a simple yes or no. The response may take time

– even a dark night of the soul
when we go for long periods
without feeling God’s presence in
our lives. This waiting can feel like
a long journey crossing a desert in
search of an oasis.

An understanding of God’s
omnipresence extends to all of
creation. Elizabeth Barrett
Browning put it this way: “Earth’s
crammed with heaven, and every
common bush afire with God.”
Henry Van Dyke wrote, “Lift up
the stone, there shalt thou find me;
cleave the wood, and I am there.”
And while we don’t see a father
figure with a long white beard

beneath the stone or wood, we
experience the reality of a living
Presence in the secrets of our
hearts and in love for one another.
As we read in First John (4:12)
“No one has ever seen God, but if
we love one another, God lives in
us and His love is made complete
in us.”

The Feast of Pentecost which
we celebrate today is a good time
to ask these questions. Fifty days
after the first Easter people were
filled with God’s presence
speaking various languages which
they understood as the gift of the
Holy Spirit to them -- even in their

great diversity. There wasn't one voice, one way to hear, one way to pray and rejoice. The Spirit's presence was felt in multiple ways drawing people together. It was the experience of understanding that God is present in each of us at the same time. God listens and speaks within the entire creation.

Perhaps a bigger question to ask is whether we can learn to hear God's voice in the secrets of our hearts. For me the hearing is primarily in heart songs; that is, listening not from thoughts I think up and keep in my head, but in releasing myself into the presence

of God without a score (my agenda) to hear what my heart strings might be sounding. For me it is as if a transcendent consciousness speaks to my consciousness and is received as if by surprise. God may first speak through the language of silence. And translating the music of silence into words often fails, but the heart feels the message before the mind translates it into thoughts. My experience is not unique. It's a way that God lets us feel God's presence to live our lives day by day, turning the ordinary into the extraordinary.

