



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + Feb. 14, 2021 AD + **Transfiguration/Lent***

This Week: Silence

“The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent.”

That call to silence in Habakkuk 2:20 might seem to militate against devotion. Isn't devotion speaking to God in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving? It is, in part. Yet the appearance of God often results in silence or speechlessness, too. “Be silent before the Lord God” (Zephaniah 1:7). “Search your hearts and be silent” (Psalm 4:4). God silences the foe, the avenger, and even the highly-esteemed elder (Psalm 8:2, Job 12:20). He struck Zechariah mute for not believing His Word (Luke 1:20), and the women who first saw the risen Lord “said nothing to anybody, for they were afraid” (Mark 16:8). In Scripture, silence appears as both the proper and natural response to God's presence, or sometimes as God's punishment on unbelievers.

So what is it for us in our devotion?

When we recall that God makes the believer righteous by faith in Jesus Christ alone, and not by our manner of prayer or devotion, then silence takes on a very new and refreshing role. Silence becomes a joyful confession of who we really are before God: we are the silent ones, whose words cannot earn His attention. God is the gracious speaker, whose words welcome us into His presence, and devotion unfolds as His words become our own. Practicing silence in our devotion helps remind us of that happy news.

About the Cover Art

“He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, but He did not open His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). Jesus did not raise up His voice in protest of His condemnation, but proceeded to the cross in silence. In “Jesus Mocked,” by Philippe de Champaigne, we have an image of our silent Savior after His mockery by the Roman soldiers. The scarlet robe of the soldiers reflects the richer robe of blood on his shoulders and ankles, and beneath His crown of thorns we know there rests an unseen but heavenly diadem. What thoughts fill His mind? We do not know: our Lord remains silent, alone in His suffering.

Lent: A Time to Be Silent and Still

“Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). While the world often associates silence with oppression, the believer finds freedom in silence. In our silence, God makes room to speak, and in His speaking, He opens to us a whole new world of hope, peace, and life. Silence and stillness are therefore hallmarks of Christian devotion, and one time to intensify that devotion is the season of Lent.

Traditionally, Lent consists of a 40-day fast prior to Easter (excluding Sundays, when the Church commemorates the resurrection of the Lord by never fasting but always feasting in the presence of Christ). Perhaps, rather than fasting from food this Lent, you might fast from extraneous *sound*. Select regular and recurring times to give up the news, the radio, music, TV, and even regular conversation so that you might be still, silent, and listen to the Word of the Lord in some fashion.

Daily Readings for the Week of February 21 (Lent 1)

S	Jeremiah 9:23-24 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 Mark 2:18-22	Hebrews 4:1-10 John 3:16-21
M	Deuteronomy 8:1-20 Hebrews 2:11-18 John 2:1-12	F Deuteronomy 10:12-22 Hebrews 4:11-16 John 3:22-36
T	Deuteronomy 9:1-12 Hebrews 3:1-11 John 2:13-22	Sa Deuteronomy 11:18-28 Hebrews 5:1-10 John 4:1-26
W	Deuteronomy 9:13-21 Hebrews 3:12-19 John 2:23-3:15	<i>These readings correspond to pages 787-816 in Volume I of <u>For All the Saints</u>. To acquire <u>For All the Saints</u> or other devotionals, please contact the church office.</i>
Th	Deuteronomy 9:23-10:5	

Ways to Use Silence in Daily Devotion

1. **By Itself.** All things are created by God, including the gift of silence (1 Kings 19:12). Pausing to sit or stand in silence for a time, allowing yourself to hear the world around you and your thoughts to drift, can help clear your mind, calm your soul, and increase your attentiveness to the neighbors God has given you.
2. **Before Prayer.** Before you pray, take time to be still, collecting your thoughts and remembering those for whom you may pray: God, in praise and adoration; your family, neighbors, and enemies in their need; others whom you may have forgotten. Let silence help you appreciate the sound of prayer (whether internal to your mind or spoken) and God's attentiveness to you all the more.
3. **Before and After Reading Scripture or Meditation.** An audience quiets itself to hear a great work of music or theater. We may do the same before hearing the greatest words ever given to humankind, pausing to clear our minds and domestic spaces of extraneous noise before attending to God's Word. Doing the same afterwards provides time to let the Word linger and make its way from mind to heart.
4. **Noon Remembrance.** Each noon may serve as a time for the believer to remember our Lord's crucifixion at that same hour. To do so, you may take a period of silence to meditate on the image of His suffering, pray, use the psalms, or read an account of His passion.
5. **Throughout Worship.** Practicing times of silence at worship is simply an extension of devotional practice. Silence before worship, before lessons at worship, or during the sermon and Holy Communion lends itself towards nourishing a receptive mind and heart that ponders and appreciates the great gifts being given.