The Smallest Voice in the Room

“Whoever has ears, let them hear” (Matthew 11:15).

Scripture: Matthew 11:7-19
Song: “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say”

He sits in the back of my room and rarely speaks. You know him. In fact I may be describing you: the student who quietly works, doesn’t demand attention, and is often overlooked. In a class of 23 third graders, the quiet students are the ones who get lost. Their voices don’t rise above the noise of those who are more demanding. It takes a concentrated effort on my part to listen to them and give the attention and support they need.

You may not be a classroom teacher, but we all are bombarded with voices and noises at various times throughout our day. We move through a loud and distracting world, which comes at us in a multitude of forms. Social media, families and friends, and just the background hum of life that invades our thoughts—these all contribute to blocking out the things to which we should be giving our attention and support.

Jesus is asking His disciples, then and now, to listen for His voice. It may be in that sermon you heard, a Scripture passage or devotion you read, or that small tug within your heart. Whatever method He chooses, He is asking you to lean in and listen. May we open our ears to the needs of those around us and listen for the voice of Jesus as He guides and directs us through this crazy, loud world.

Father, You offer us a refuge from this world’s distractions. Help us to listen with fresh ears to ‘Your voice today. In Jesus’ name, amen.
Savoring the Times

. . . a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted [Ecclesiastes 3:2, KJV].

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:2-8
Song: “Day by Day”

The light shone on my grandpa’s silver hair as he studied *The Old Farmer’s Almanac*. A farmer for over 40 years, he spent hours planning his crops around the almanac’s predictions. He knew the importance of planting, cultivating, and then harvesting. He never hurried any process but savored each step.

Solomon details the events of life with care and precision. There is a steady cadence to his tone, reminding us that God created life to have rhythm and synchrony.

So often we rush our days. We look to the next event, opportunity, or adventure to give us joy. Once we are married, then . . . Once we are promoted, then . . . Once we are debt free, then . . . Let us not hasten to the next moment but pause at the moments of our lives to savor each season. While we experience each one, let us give thanks to the Lord. For in all things, He is there. His presence envelops us. His love arches over us. His time is always now. Linger in it.

Father, thank You that You are with us in every moment of our lives for Your purpose and our benefit. In Jesus’ name, amen.
Joy in the Mundane

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:9-15
Song: “Heavenly Sunlight”

Carl entered the high-rise building, already exhausted after getting his kids off to school, fighting rush-hour traffic, and spilling coffee on his suit. A cheery “Good morning” greeted him as he headed to the elevator. It was Josef, the building custodian. The cheerful European immigrant swept the dirty sidewalks, held open doors for rushing people, and cleaned restrooms like it was his high calling from Heaven. Carl returned Josef’s smile, reminded of joy despite struggles.

Solomon amassed great wealth yet remained unsatisfied. He questioned why he existed, and he despaired over life’s redundancy. Then, in the middle of his diatribe of hopelessness, he wrote the truth that God made everything beautiful. Solomon reached to Heaven with restored faith in God’s active work in his own life.

Our lives cycle through patterns: work, school, church, sleeping, eating, playing... Joy can easily slip away amid the dozens of dirty diapers, school car pools, hospital visits to a sick loved one, and rush-hour traffic. Centering on God brings renewal. His power fuels our peace, fires our joy, and calms our minds. Reflect on God’s beauty found in the routine rhythms of life. Notice His orchestration of events for our benefit and growth. Faith in God’s plan is the foundation of our joy.

Father, thank You for Your hand in all circumstances. Keep my joy alive in You. Help me keep my eyes on Your beautiful work and master plan. In Jesus’ name, amen.
God’s Perfect Order

“All the firstborn are mine” (Numbers 3:13).

Scripture: Numbers 3:11-13
Song: “Have I Done My Best for Jesus?”

Dennis paid for gas in the car with the remaining money he had. He didn’t know how he was going to feed his family, keep a roof over their heads, or support their fledgling church. He only knew God had called his family as missionaries. He drove to the airport to pick up a minister coming to visit their mission. When the guest minister climbed into the car, he handed Dennis an envelope filled with cash. “Our church sent you this gift,” he said. “Thank you for your sacrifice.”

The Levites were chosen as the tribe who would lead the people in worship. They provided a symbol to the Israelites that God is holy and good, and encouraged them to keep His commands. Their singular devotion to God shone before the Israelites, reminding them to put Him first always.

We need that same reminder because the world’s order is backwards compared to God’s order. Riches, popularity, status—none of these endure. God calls us to let Him structure our lives according to His commands. What He asks of you may sound foolish to the world: Give away your money. Go on a mission trip. Become a foster parent. Start a nonprofit ministry. But if we trust Him, He will direct us. His provision will never fail. Keep Him first, and everything else will fall into its right place. He promises.

Heavenly Father, I give my best to You today, no matter what You ask of me. Thank You for Your provision and grace in my life. In Jesus’ name, amen.
An Opportune Calling

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (Luke 2:22).

Song: “I Would Be True”

Amy grew up in an affluent home. Her parents believed she was destined for great accomplishments in the world. Yet while Amy was still a young woman, the children of India captured her heart. She left her family and her wealth to rescue young girls from slavery and build an orphanage. The girls called her Amma, meaning “mother.” Amy Carmichael fulfilled God’s calling for her.

Baby Jesus held the hope of the world and the wisdom of God in His heart. In His human form, though, He had human parents to model obedience to God’s ways. Mary and Joseph carefully followed God’s outline for His people, evidencing their faith by their actions.

Parents have a unique calling to guide their children in the ways of God. They are commissioned for this sacred task, and God grants grace to them for it. But even those of us without children can influence others. Showcasing obedience to God knows no parameters. You can mentor a young person’s faith, volunteer at your church’s nursery, or give time to your local seniors community. Our actions demonstrate our faith. Be creative, be open, and respond to the Holy Spirit as He guides you to opportunities to spread God’s love. He will be glorified. Ultimately, that’s the goal.

Father, show us ways to love others. Grant us grace as we model our faith to everyone around us. In Jesus’ name, amen.
Extraordinary Around the Corner

The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him (Luke 2:33).

Song: “It’s Just Like His Great Love”

My shift had just begun at the busy retail store, yet already two people had called in sick, the restrooms were dirty, and my boss had yelled at me. An elderly lady approached. I stiffened, braced for an impending complaint. Instead, she grasped my hand, smiled, and said, “God sees you. He promises all things will work together for your good.” Then she walked away. I stood speechless at the unexpected encouragement of Romans 8:28 via this stranger.

Joseph and Mary did not expect a blessing when they came to sacrifice to God. While they followed God’s letter of the law, a prophet of God showed up to pray over their little one. Simeon had waited patiently for this moment. He was prepped as the messenger of God to the parents of the Messiah.

We tend to be run ragged under societal pressures. We focus on our schedules and next achievements. But what happens if we reset and focus on His presence and power? In our chaos, He grants peace. In our mess, He offers direction. During stress, He gives grace. A long car ride becomes a prayer sanctuary. The waiting room at the hospital transforms to a place of worship. Cleaning a messy house changes to an act of gratitude for our family. Look up from the mess. Be still. An extraordinary blessing awaits, directly from God the Father.

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your love in my life. I am reminded today that You see me and know me. I love You. In Jesus’ name, amen.
In the Waiting

She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying (Luke 2:37).

Scripture: Luke 2:36-38
Song: “Child of the King”

John knocked on William’s door for the hundredth time. “I won’t leave until you answer me.” The door slowly opened. William’s haggard face stared into John’s concerned one. “Let me help you!” John said, embracing William. Over the next few years, John faithfully cared for William during his depression. John’s friendship inspired William Cowper to write songs about God’s love and care. God’s love shone through John, transforming William’s heart.

Anna knew heartache and loss. Luke pens that she was married for only seven years, then lived as a widow until she was very old. Love, then loss. Joy, then heartache. Anna remained in God’s house. Her community supported her, and she became a prophetess. She clung to God’s promises, and He never lost sight of her.

Often we see only the public side of people—the pieces they choose to show to us. As Christ followers, our calling is to peel away the surface layer. Gray hair and wrinkles cloak years of wisdom. Sarcastic comments obscure a yearning for acceptance. Angry outbursts mask cries for unconditional love. Listen with empathy. Withhold judgment. God’s love reaches to the darkest moments of any past, present, or future. His grace envelops every chapter of the story. You and I, we and they—all believers are His children. He is writing each of us an amazing ending. All in His time.

Father, help us as we wait on You during our deepest struggles. Thank You for Your promise of hope and light. We rest on You. In Jesus’ name, amen.