

QUIET: Cancelling the Noise

07 - Metamorphosis: The Way of Transformation
Church on the Park | Sunday, 10 OCT 2021 | Glen Gerhauser

Texts: “The LORD spoke to me again: “Because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah הַלֵּשׁ and rejoices over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, therefore the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty floodwaters of the Euphrates—the king of Assyria with all his pomp. It will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks (Isa. 8:5–7, NIV).

My heart is not proud, LORD,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.
But I have calmed and quieted myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.
Israel, put your hope in the LORD
both now and forevermore
(Ps 131:1–3, NIV).

Theme: In an age of noise, God has called us to live a quiet life (1 Thes. 4:11).

Intro: Today, I want to talk to you about quietness. We live in the noisiest generation since the beginning of time. As I write, I can hear the roar of the Gateway Motorway. The rev of cars and the thunderous sounds of motorcycles. A wood saw buzzes in my neighbours' yard, and a jet has just flown overhead. Now a train screeches pass. In the past, we'd often hear one of our neighbours yelling expletives throughout the day. Then there's the phone dingling, ringing and pulsating all day. But it's not just harmful noises; there are beautiful sounds. I can hear the wind rustling in the trees and the birds singing.

Psalm 131 deals with the noise and loudness of life. It reflects on the clamour of the soul. And it teaches us an important lesson: the greatest risk to your soul is not the noises without, but rather the noise within. God has designed our souls to be a sanctuary of quietness and rest—a dwelling place for God and his shalom. However, we don't learn this quickly. When teaching on Psalm 131, Spurgeon wrote: “Comparing all the Psalms to gems, we should liken this to a pearl: how beautifully it will adorn the neck of patience. It is one of the shortest Psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn” (*Treasury of David*, Psalm 131).

So how can you cancel the noise and enjoy God's shalom within us?

1) Value the gentle, the meek and the quiet (Isa. 8:5-7).

- In Isaiah 8, God's people were losing their way.
 - They began to value the loud, the powerful and the pompous.

- They rejoiced over the power, strength and resources of Rezin, the King of Aram (modern-day Syria), and they looked with hope to Pekah, the son of Remaliah, the head of the Northern tribes of Israel.
 - Yahweh convicts them of rejecting the gently flowing waters of Shiloah.
 - They longed for the roar of the ocean rather than the quiet waters that supplied Jerusalem with peace and sustained satisfaction.
 - In ancient times, the gentle, flowing waters of Shiloah was the only source of water for Jerusalem.
 - It came from an underground spring called the Gihon, and this spring still flows today.
 - Jesus sent the man born blind to wash his clay-covered eyes in these waters.
 - And the Psalmist sings about these reviving and restoring waters when he says, “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God” (Psalm 46:4).
 - The Psalmist speaks of both the natural, underground water system that kept Jerusalem safe and secure—so that the people did not need to leave the city for water—and also the heavenly waters from above—the Holy Spirit.
 - This week I spent time listening to these waters (flowing from the Gihon).
 - The sounds of these waters are calming and tranquil, like the sound of a stream on a recording to help you sleep.
 - It’s like the quiet waters of Psalm 23.
 - Today, it’s easy for us to reject the calm streams of the Holy Spirit.
 - Everyone is clamouring for attention. We want to be heard.
 - People are angry and want their opinion known.
 - Social media deceives us, giving us a platform to spew our outrage.
 - We pressure our spiritual leaders to voice and comment on social issues like they are full-time journalists.
 - And our tone shouts: “Give us what we want or we will leave you.”
 - Sadly, in this time when Christians should be quiet, listening to God’s wisdom—not what we think is right—we have been speaking loudly.
 - And of course, we have all the quotes to back ourselves up. Quotes like, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” And also, “Silence in the face of injustice is complicity with the oppressor.” And who can forget what Jesus said, “You are the light of the world.”
 - But we haven’t been much of a light because we are speaking without living.
 - Moreover, we are speaking rather than listening to the still small voice of God.

- In other words, we are reacting rather than responding.

2) Focus on listening more than speaking (Ecc. 5:1-7).

- What do I mean by listening?
 - I mean listening to God. That's first and foremost.
 - But also, I mean listening to one another.
 - When you are self-righteous, you stop listening.
- The old adage is, "You have two ears and one mouth, so listen twice as much as you speak."
- More than the courage to speak, we need the courage to listen.
- And yet, we are afraid to listen because God may upset or convict us—we may need to humble ourselves and repent.
- Recently, I bought noise-cancelling headphones.
 - I've never owned noise-cancelling headphones and discovered that the technology is quite impressive.
 - It does more than just muffle the sounds on the outside.
 - It uses a mic to pick up all the background noise and then feeds a reverse sound wave into your ears to cancel out the noise.
 - In math, it's like saying $+1 + -1 = 0$.
- It's the opposite sound wave (the reverse sound wave) that cancels the noise.
 - This is the same way God cancels the noise within us.
 - He speaks a word—a quiet and gentle word—which goes precisely against the grain of the noise around you.
 - It's his still small voice, rather than the wind, earthquake and fire all around.
 - While the Christian world is often saying petition and protest, God is saying, "Get back to my house, humble yourselves, repent, pray and seek my face—that's the only way I can truly heal the land."
 - Stop all your silly plans and posts, and listen to me.
- As Christians, we develop selective-hearing—only hearing from God what we want.
- As God's people, we have to learn again how to be disciples in this Social-Media, COVID and Government Mandate age.
 - And regarding government mandates, they are nothing new. The Romans (at the time of Jesus) were famous for them.
 - Remember, it was through a government mandate that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, fulfilling Micah's prophecy.
- This is a time of petition and protest, anger and outrage, pushing and shoving back.
 - The government pushes you, and you shove back. Someone says something you disagree with, and you fight back.
 - But we need to ask ourselves, "How do the ethics and ways of Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount apply right now?"
 - Has the command to turn the other cheek been revoked? Has going the extra mile after being forced to go the first mile still important? (Matthew 5-7).

3) Cultivate a Quiet Soul (Psalm 131).

- Again, remember what Spurgeon said about Psalm 131: “It is one of the shortest Psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn.”
- When a child is being weaned, it fights with the mother tooth and nail.
 - The child doesn’t like the transition and change.
 - They want instant gratification.
 - The unweaned child wants things to go back to the good old days.
- And yet, God is trying to wean us from the crying and demanding, the hustle and the noise—so that we are inwardly content.
- Cultivate a quiet soul through quiet times with God.
- Take Selah moments—moments to pause, soak in God and lift up your soul to him.
- And lastly, as Psalm 131 concludes, hope in the Lord.
 - Hope is what calms the storm within.
 - Hope is having an overriding positive expectation of God’s goodness and victory over all things.
- Quiet times are about connecting with God—communing with him and listening to his still, small voice.
 - His voice is the opposite wave. It’s the reverse of what the world is shouting—even what the Christian world is shouting.
- I know for a fact that God is faithful to speak to those who seek his face.
 - And that’s the stand we are taking as a church: to seek his face, enjoy his presence, sing his praise and speak his living Word.

Conclusion: Value the gentle, focus on listening and cultivate a quiet soul. This is the way to cancel the noise and live in the Lord’s peace.

ENDNOTES

Psalm 131 (My Poetic Translation)

Yahweh,
No Pride
In my heart,
No cockiness
In my eyes,
No strut
In my step,
And no thought that
I'm an expert.

Instead, let me be
Balanced,
My soul
Quiet,
Like a weaned child
Resting with his mother,
Like a weaned child –
calm, content and satisfied –
My soul.

Hope,
O Israel,
Wait,
Confidently expecting
Yahweh,
Both now
And
Forever.

...

הַשִּׁלֹּחַ (for שִׁלּוּחַ; as this noun is written in Chaldee, of the form כִּישׁוּר , קִיטוּר a sending of water, i.e. aqueduct; compare the root. Psa. 104:10; and Gr. ἰέναι ῥόον, Il. xii. 25) with the art. הַשִּׁלֹּחַ [Siloah], pr.n. of an aqueduct at the foot of Zion, on the west of Jerusalem (see Joseph. Bell. Jud. v. 12, § 2; vi. 7, § 2; 8, § 5) [rather to the east of Jerusalem, through part of Ophel; see Robinson], Isaiah 8:6; called also שִׁלְחַי Neh. 3:15, and גִּיחֹן (which see) [this is a different stream]; which latter the Chald. and Syr., 1 Ki. 1:33, 38, render שִׁלּוּחַ; although these two names are thus to be distinguished, that Gihon (breaking forth) prop. denotes the fountain; Siloah (sending) is properly the aqueduct. Some, from the words of 2 Ch. 32:30, have incorrectly supposed the fountains to have been to the east of the city; the words should be rendered, "(Hezekiah) brought (the waters of Gihon) down to the west of the city" (the fountain being on the south-west); nor does the authority of modern tradition avail anything against that of Josephus, loc. cit., although it has been followed on most maps. [Gihon and Siloah should not be confounded; the former is west of Jerusalem, the latter runs through the

hill Ophel to the south-east; it is the confounding of the two which occasions all the difficulty.] LXX. and Josephus, loc. cit. write the name Σιλῳάμ; and so, Job. 9:7 (where this name is rendered ὁ ἀπεσταλμένος; abstr. for concr.). See Relandi Palæstina, p. 858; my Comment. on Isaiah 7:3; also Tholuck, Beytr. z. Erkl. des N. T., p. 123, seqq. [and especially Robinson.]

Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures (p. 827). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

SILOAM, POOL OF (κολυμβήθρα Σιλῳάμ, kolymbēthra Silōam). An artificial pool that received waters from the Spring of Gihon through Hezekiah's Tunnel. Jesus, when healing the man who was born blind, told him to wash in the Pool of Siloam as part of the process of regaining his sight (John 9:7). For further information, see these articles: Gihon, Spring of; Hezekiah's Tunnel; Siloam Channel.

Barry, J. D., Bomar, D., Brown, D. R., Klippenstein, R., Mangum, D., Sinclair Wolcott, C., ... Widder, W. (Eds.). (2016). Siloam, Pool of. In *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

GIHON, SPRING OF (גִּיחֹן, gichon). A spring located on the east side of Jerusalem, in the Kidron Valley. A significant water source for Jerusalem in antiquity.

Biblical Relevance

The Spring of Gihon, whose name comes from the Hebrew word meaning “to burst forth” (גִּיחַ, gych), played an important role in several key events in Jerusalem's history:

- When David conquered the city of the Jebusites, he entered the city through tunnels built to access the Spring of Gihon (2 Sam 5:8). First Chronicles 11:6 records that Joab was the first to ascend, “so he became chief” (ESV).
- While Adonijah attempted to usurp the throne in an anointing ritual at En-Rogel, Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed Solomon as the legitimate king at the Spring of Gihon (1 Kgs 1:33, 38, 45).
- To prepare Jerusalem to withstand Sennacherib's siege in 701 BC, Hezekiah took efforts to redirect the water from this spring, located outside the city, to bring water into the city (2 Chr 32:30).
- Isaiah likely referred to the Spring of Gihon as the “waters of Shiloah” in his description of the Assyrian attack (Isa 8:6; the name Shiloah is from the Hebrew term שִׁלּוּחַי, shelach, meaning “aqueduct, canal, water channel”). Since the people rejected “the gently flowing waters of Shiloah” (i.e., God's protection), they would face the “turbulent and mighty waters of the Euphrates River” (i.e., Assyria; NET).
- Gihon is cited in the description of Manasseh's refortification of the walls (2 Chr 33:14). The outer wall of the City of David was built up west of the Spring of Gihon.

Distinction from the River Gihon

The Spring of Gihon in Jerusalem is not to be confused with the river Gihon mentioned in reference to Eden (Gen 2:10–14). This is sometimes viewed as a mythological reference

(Neiman, "Gihon and Pishon," 321–28). However, it more likely refers to an actual water source in Mesopotamia, perhaps characterized by Gihon's lexical root "to burst forth" (גַּיַח, *gych*). Genesis 2:13 describes Gihon as running "through the entire land of Cush." While Cush often refers to Ethiopia in the Bible (e.g., Isa 20:3, 5), in this case it refers to a region in Mesopotamia. The immediate context identifies its location in the east (Gen 2:8), and the broader context also connects Cush with Mesopotamia (Gen 10:8–12). Speiser connected this "Cush" to the region of the Kassites (Speiser, "Rivers of Paradise," 176–77). The Kassite rule replaced the dynasty of Hammurabi from the Old Babylonian Period after Muršillis I led the Hittite invasion of Babylon in 1595 BC. Given this connection, in conjunction with the description in the Eden passage, it seems likely that the river Gihon refers to one of the water sources that was connected to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Geographical Significance

The Spring of Gihon was essential to the existence of Jerusalem as it provided the city with the water necessary for a permanent settlement. While the Western Hill of Jerusalem was higher, which would provide the city with greater fortification, it lacked a water source. For this reason, the city was originally built on the Eastern Hill. Topographically, this spring is located in the midst of a cavernous hill, providing the setting of David's conquest of the Jebusites.

Archaeological Findings

The Spring of Gihon is in modern times identified as 'En Sittī Maryam ("Fountain of the Lady Mary"). Given its prominent role in Jerusalem's history, the site (including tunnels) has received attention from archaeologists. In 1867 Charles Warren discovered an underground tunnel (known today as Warren's Shaft) that provided people with access to the water of the Spring of Gihon through the use of ropes and containers. Hezekiah's Tunnel has also attracted archaeological attention. The tunnel enabled Hezekiah to provide water to the Tyropoeon Valley from the Spring of Gihon. Hezekiah's construction of the tunnel is described in biblical texts (2 Kgs 20:20; 2 Chr 32:1–4) and the Siloam Inscription. The excavations of Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron in the late 1990s have provided new explanations for the water system. They established that the early stages of the water system date to the Middle Bronze IIB Age (ca. 18th–17th centuries BC). Furthermore, they discovered two considerable fortifications around the Spring of Gihon, which attest to the importance of the city and its water supply (Reich and Shukron, "Excavations at the Gihon Spring," 327–39).

Selected Resources for Further Study

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