

### Call to Worship

Listen, my people, to my teaching; tilt your ears toward the words of my mouth.

**The Lord said to Samuel, "I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of all who hear it tingle! All you nations, bless our God! Let the sound of his praise be heard!"**

### Prayer of Invocation

Creator God, you don't relish sacrifices or offerings; you don't require entirely burned offerings or compensation offerings— but you have given me ears! **Ears to hear and eyes to see— the Lord made them both.**

My ears had heard about you, but now my eyes have seen you. **Lord, no one can compare to you, no God except you, just as we have heard with our own ears. From now on my eyes will be open and my ears will pay attention to the prayers offered in this place, you, Lord, definitely listened. You hear the sound of my prayers. Open my ears fully, so I don't miss a thing. Amen**

### The Word

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." **They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.**

John was standing again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus walking along he said, "Look! The Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard what he said, and they followed Jesus. **Everyone who heard him was amazed by his understanding and his answers. He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."**

Many Samaritans in that city believed in Jesus because of the woman-at-the-well's word when she testified, "He told me everything I've ever done. **He stayed two more days and many more believed because of his word, and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this one is truly the savior of the world."**

When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to Jesus to ask him to come and heal his servant. **When Jesus heard these words, he was impressed with the centurion. He turned to the crowd following him and said, "I tell you, even in Israel I haven't found faith like this." When the centurion's friends returned to his house, they found the servant restored to health.**

Now when the crowd heard this, they were astonished at his teaching. Jesus left with his disciples and went to the lake. A large crowd followed him because they had heard what he was doing. They were from Galilee. **Then he replied to John's disciples, "Go, report to John what you have seen and heard. Those who were blind are able to see. Those who were crippled now walk. People with skin diseases are cleansed. Those who were deaf now hear. Those who were dead are raised up. And good news is preached to the poor.**

The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about Jesus, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent guards to arrest him. **The chief priests and legal experts heard this and tried to find a way to destroy him. They regarded him as dangerous because the whole crowd was enthralled at his teaching.**

Herod the king heard about these things, because the name of Jesus had become well-known. **Herod was very glad to see Jesus, for he had heard about Jesus and had wanted to see him for quite some time. He was hoping to see Jesus perform some sign.**

But the angel said to the women, "Don't be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He isn't here, because he's been raised from the dead, just as he said. **Come, see the place where they laid him. Now hurry, go and tell his disciples, 'He's been raised from the dead. He's going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' I've given the message to you."** With great fear and excitement, they hurried away from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples.

Living the Word

*Listen, my people, to the Lord's teaching; tilt your ears toward the words of my mouth. **The Lord said to all who have gathered here today: "I am about to do something in Hayward that will make the ears of all who hear it tingle!"***

Are your ears perked up? We live in an area called 'the Round Lake Flats.' The open fields and blacktop roads make sounds echo around us and we can hear sounds coming and going for a long distance. I may have mentioned before that whenever I hear sirens, my ears perk up. I pause to pray for those in crisis, be it fire or car accident or a trip to the hospital. My second prayer is for those who serve in those times, including my son, Donald the Fireman.

This week my ears perked up even more with the sirens, as very shortly after the sirens began, there was another similar sound overlapping them. Several times, we heard coyotes howling along with the sirens. Once we had identified their eerie siren-like howls, we began to locate them across the field in our woods. In our world, humans often mimic God's creation, but not so often does nature mimic human creation...

This week, I have inter mingled your responses to 'What makes your ears perk up?' with some scripture that says something about your responses...

### **1 –Human: A Choir Singing, Voices of Friends, Someone Whispering, Baby's cries:**

**Genesis 21:17** *God heard the boy's cries, and God's messenger called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "Hagar! What's wrong? Don't be afraid. God has heard the boy's cries over there.*

**Exodus 2:6** *When she opened it, she saw the child. The boy was crying, and she felt sorry for him. She said, "This must be one of the Hebrews' children."*

### **Someone walking nearby, people laughing:**

#### **Nehemiah 12:43**

*They offered great sacrifices on that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy. The women and children also rejoiced, and the sound of the joy in Jerusalem could be heard from far away.*

### **Grandchildren calling to chat, phone calls from grandchildren.**

**2 – Food:** No scriptures that describe the noises of food - **Popcorn popping, Sizzle of Meat on the Grill:** Takes us back to mouth-watering...

### **3-Nature: Wind,**

**Acts 2:2** *Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting.*

## **Rain on the roof,**

**Jeremiah 51:16** *At the sound of God's voice, the heavenly waters roar. God raises the clouds from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain and sends the wind from his treasuries.*

## **Psalm 104:7**

*But at your rebuke they ran away; they fled in fear at the sound of your thunder.*

Anyone here who fears the sound of thunder? When I was a young adult I rented with a friend, the upstairs of an old house. One night we were awakened by a storm. There was a crack of thunder, and at the same moment, as we watched through the window, lightning hit the old oak tree which sat 10 feet from the edge of the roof beside us. It went down the tree and back up the other side. We both screamed and ran to the kitchen.

Of course the electricity was out and we didn't know if that big tree was about to fall on our bedroom so we scurried from room to room making quite a bit of noise. Someone down stairs started pounding on the ceiling for us to be quiet. So we curled up on the living room floor as far from the bedroom as possible and tried to sleep. The next morning the landlord, who lived downstairs came up to apologize and took us down to see the tree.

The whole lawn was littered with little strips of the tree, as if it had exploded. It took me years not to shake when I heard thunder. I'm better now, but I have a healthy respect for the forces of nature...

## **Noise in the woods** (sounds spooky – lions and tigers and bears, oh my!), **Birds singing, A Loon calling, A loon through an open window in the evening, Birds singing in the trees in the early morning**

## **Psalm 104:12**

*Overhead, the birds in the sky make their home, chirping loudly in the trees.*

The Psalmist concurs with what perked his ears, thousands of years ago. Nature reminds us the though everything is changing, some things in creation are not. We still respond to the sounds, even though it sometimes takes us a lot of noise clearing to get to the special ones...

**4 – Our Reality:** the first one someone shared was **gossip**. Scripture has something to say about that...,

## **Psalm 31:13-15**

*Yes, I've heard all the gossiping, terror all around; so many gang up together against me, they plan to take my life! But me? I trust you, LORD! I affirm, "You are my God." My future is in your hands.*

## **Job 4:12**

*But a word sneaked up on me; my ears caught a hint of it.*

## **Luke 12:3**

*Jesus said, "Therefore, whatever you have said in the darkness will be heard in the light, and whatever you have whispered in the rooms deep inside the house will be announced from the rooftops."*

Have you ever had a word sneak up on you and wanted to know more or tell someone else? Gossip happens so quickly and we are caught in it. 'Oh be careful little ears, what you hear.'

Another reality is as I have said, **Sirens** make my ears perk up. The church book club is reading: The Nightingale, by Kristin Hannah. It is about world War II and is set in occupied France. Though I have never experienced it, she speaks of **the Drone of Planes just before the bombs**.

## **Habakkuk 3:16**

*I hear and my insides tremble. My lips quiver at the sound. Rottenness enters my bones.*

*I tremble while I stand, while I wait for the day of distress to come; the people to attack us.*

## **Jeremiah 50:22**

*There's the sound of war in the land and enormous devastation.*

## **Isaiah 15:8**

*An outcry sounds within the borders of Moab, as far as Eglaim, a cry of distress, as far as Beer-elim, a cry of distress.*

Reading The Nightingale has reminded me of all of the stories of war. Though they affect everyone on earth, in the last century they have, for the most part taken place outside of our country. We are less affected that

those who lived in the midst of fear on a moment to moment basis for years at a time, not knowing if and when there will be an end to war. This week I was keenly aware of the sounds of war as I read.

Even so God is with us:

**Isaiah 30:19**

*People in Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. God will certainly be merciful to you. Hearing the sound of your outcry, God will answer you.*

**My ears perk up to the doorbell, the phone ringing, someone calling my name,**

**Song of Solomon 5:2** *I was sleeping, but my heart was awake. A sound! My love is knocking:*

The Song of Solomon is a love poem, to a very special friend...Yet sometimes we ignore the doorbell or the phone, because we are too busy.

**Isaiah 42:20**

*You have seen many things, but don't keep watch. With ears open, you don't hear.*

**Matthew 13:15**

*For this people's senses have become calloused, and they've become hard of hearing, and they've shut their eyes so that they won't see with their eyes or hear with their ears or understand with their minds, and change their hearts and lives that I may heal them.*

God sends us messages through others, sometimes they are messages of encouragement and sometimes they are messages of need. Our ears were given to us to hear the cries of the needy and the calls from those who hold us up and keep us accountable.

**Matthew 13:9**

**Jesus said: "Everyone who has ears should pay attention."**

**God**

**Genesis 3:7-10**

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

The man replied, "I heard your sound in the garden; I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself."

**1 Kings 19:11-12**

Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the 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 still small voice.

**Psalms 66:18-20**

If I had cherished evil in my heart, my Lord would not have listened. But God definitely listened. He heard the sound of my prayer. Bless God! He didn't reject my prayer; he didn't withhold his faithful love from me.

**THE WORD from the Gospels**

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

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## **Jesus**

### **John 15:15**

*I don't call you servants any longer, because servants don't know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because everything I heard from my Father I have made known to you.*

### **Matthew 11:15**

*Let the person who has ears, hear.*

## **Holy Spirit**

### **John 3:8**

*God's Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It's the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

### **Acts 2:6**

*When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages.*

Our ears hear many things, we hear multitudes of things at the same time. Sometimes they are so loud it is difficult to define them. But we tune into what we want to hear and ignore most of the rest...It can be difficult to listen beyond the wind and thunder of life to hear the 'still small voice' of God trying to get through.

We are moving on to a new week and a new question, but I invite you to listen for God in the noise around you at all times. God hears all you say with your voice, in your mind and in your heart. Perk up your ears and you will hear God's voice speaking to you, through the scriptures and through your life...