

In theatre, as you prepare a show for opening, there's this time in theatre called tech. Tech is when the lighting is established, the scenic and costume changes are rehearsed, and performers are seeing the theatre for the first time, usually. There can be quite literally hundreds of folks working in the theatre between cast, staff, and crew.

There's a table, often quite wide, that gets placed in the middle of the theatre, over the top of the seats, where the director and designers sit. Sometimes the stage manager is there with them, sometimes they aren't. But from that table, everything is run. Because my career was predominately in opera, in addition to all of the people onstage and backstage, we could have 50 to 100 musicians playing in the orchestra. That was a lot of people to get to work in concert with one another.

To get everyone's attention, we had a special solution. The GOD MIC. The God mic was a microphone which overrode all other sound. It played in every speaker in the theatre and it was loud. If the director wanted things to stop in the middle of rehearsal, speaking on the God Mic could make everyone grind to a halt quickly. During the day if I needed to get the crew ready to change set or move things, I could speak on the God mic and everyone heard, onstage, backstage, below stage. You really did have power and dominion over the building. (Not really the kind of power you want to give a 25 year old, but hey I took it)

The God Mic, the Voice of God, is something everyone in theatre stops to listen to. Only a few folks are authorized to use it and those folks have purpose and power.

Today we hear about the voice of God all through our readings. Isaiah tells us how the voice of God can cause the wilderness of Kadesh to shake. The Gospel has the voice of God descending on Jesus and he hears the voice. And the Epistle tells of the Holy Spirit coming upon folks, another form of the voice of God.

The voice of God is throughout this day we call the Baptism of Christ.

Interestingly to me, the voice of God is more present in these moments than I'm honestly comfortable with. Elijah finds the voice of God not in the whirlwind or in the earthquake, but in the still small wind. That's my comfort level with God's voice. Big booming voices from heaven are not my thing. As much as I want God to be clear and straight forward, I also prefer God to be quiet and personal. More a friend in my ear and less the echo of a sports announcer.

Whether the voice of thunder or the voice of wind, a voice at all or the movement of the Holy Spirit within me, that only later I recognize for what it is; the voice of God is no less present in our world today than when it spoke to Jesus at the baptism.

We live in a noisy world. We live in a world full of sounds. When I go to Las Vegas I am always astounded by how loud it is. Lights and sound do their best to draw me to the casino. There's a whole psychology of it. The flashing lights on the slot machine, the sound when you win or lose. Those are all meant to keep you engaged and spending money.

Sports announcers. It makes sense on the radio. I don't have images to follow so I need the narration. The stretch, the pitch, and an early swing brings the count to 2 and 2... While I don't wholly despise Joe Buck like many in our nation seem to, I also don't need him to tell me what I can plainly see while I'm watching it. Yet, we live in a narrated world.

So why is it that I can't hear the voice of God when I need to hear it. Why do I still do the things I shouldn't and don't do the things I should? If God can say this is my beloved son, in him I am well pleased, why doesn't God say "David that's a lovely idea, but if you eat half the box of oreos it negates all your gym time and will annoy your wife." Or "David, that person is truly in need and just a hello and treating them like a human will make them get through the day"

I would LOVE it if God would speak to me like that. The rest of the world doesn't have to hear it, but it would be wonderful if I could. Wouldn't we all love a world where we had moments where there was a person narration. "This is my David, in him I am well pleased." I might even like to hear "This is my David, my Creation, in him I'm moderately content. He almost got it, perhaps he'll come closer tomorrow."

The voice of God in our lives has great potential to help us be better followers of Christ. To help us know where we need to go, what we need to do, and how we need to act. Honestly, I've sat through plenty of meetings where the voice of God would have been incredibly helpful. But instead I only heard the voice of David or the voice of others.

Too many times in my life I've heard the voice of Doubt or the voice of self-centered ego. I've heard the voice of easy way out or quick fix. Most often, those aren't the voice of God.

The voice of God calls us to act and behave in ways that are often contrary to voice of the world. Do good deeds, the world loves that and so does God. But why are we doing them? Because we love our neighbors, or because it is a photo op? And that's really frustrating. When I give scholarships to deserving young people through our non-profit, I need to take those people's picture and tell their stories so that other folks will give money so we can give more scholarships. Am I the voice of God or the voice of greed?

In this world so full of voices how do I know which voices are sending me the messages from God versus the messages from the world.

I don't have that answer. I wish I did. It would make my life much easier. But I don't.

Yet maybe I do. Because the voice of God is clear. Later in the prophets, in Micah, we see the answer. In Micah the people are concerned, "Are we doing enough to please God. Does God know we are working to offer thanks and praise. Have we slaughtered enough. Have we sacrificed enough?"

Micah is clear. "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love Kindness and to walk humbly with your God."

The voice of God has amazing power. It can move mountains. It can make the earth tremble. It can do many, many things. It has power to change the world as we know it. Yet, that's not how God works. Just because God has the power to those things in a word, doesn't mean God does.

The voice of God moves quietly through the world. The voice of God is found in small loving moments. The voice of God is found in a door held for another person, in a hug that comes out of seemingly no where. It comes from the smile that small acts of kindness bring upon the face of others.

All too often we picture the voice of God sounding like Morgan Freeman or James Earl Jones blasting over the speakers. I like those images. I want God to have that gravitas. Rarely is that so. More often we have to hear God not in the mic that overrides all the speakers in the space, like in theatre. Instead we have to hear God in the very place Elijah did, in the small acts of kindness, in the hugs, in the pats on the pack and encouragement posted online.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and the spirit of God was moving across the waters. And God separated the waters from the dry land, and the voice of God remained and still remains. "This is my Sue, in whom I am well pleased," Might not come with a whole dove settling on you, but it comes when you know you've served your neighbor, here, at the store, in your work, or any other place. Others may never acknowledge our work, but God does, with a movement of the Holy Spirit, that only you feel and you know just as Jesus did at his baptism. Quietly reassuring each of us that God is with us always, in every moment.