

The God Who Calls My Name

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[0 : 0 0] This evening I want to speak to you about, I think, a very solemn and important message from Scripture. It's one that's been referred to in the text that we read, first of all, in Isaiah. It is when God speaks and he so often finds that we don't listen. In Isaiah chapter 65 and verse 12, as well as in chapter 66 and verse 4, we read God's words through the prophet, when I called, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not listen.

Now I'm sure that you've noticed, just as I've noticed, that so many people who ignore God when things are going well are yet very quick to blame God when something bad happens to them. And they always question, why did this, why did God do this to me? To such people, God is a fearful ogre, throwing down thunderbolts, as it were, where He will. Someone to be blamed, but never to be trusted. And I guess that's how very many people live. Avoid God at any cost, because life is best when God is silent. But of course, that's a caricature of how things really are. One is written that the silence of God is a terrible thing. It mocks our prayers and makes our universe a frightening, forsaken place. But God is not silent. He's a God who comes into our world, speaking, speaking to us and calling to us to respond to Him. But the world tries to drown out the voice of God. There's so much noise, and we like noise if it's going to keep God out of our thoughts and minds. But it prevents us coming to know the best words in all the world. God has been calling us from the very earliest times. If you know the Bible, you will know that when Adam and

Eve sinned, they hid themselves from God. And God came looking for them, as it were. And the first question that we read, God putting to men, was this, when He addressed Adam, where are you? And through the ages, that voice and that question have followed mankind. And they come to us today.

God is calling, where are you? Where are you in relation to Him this evening? For He says, I want to talk with you. I've got good news to share with you. But will we listen? Who then is this God who keeps calling us? What's He like? Can we really get to know Him? Let's see a little of what we can learn about the God who calls us. The first thing is that God is the Creator God.

The one who made us, and the Bible tells us that God made us in His own image. And the God who calls us is the God who created us and who has given to us the special dignity of being able to reflect something of the likeness of God in our lives. And God makes Himself known as a God who is good, and all that He made is good. And the good God made everything good that He created to be good for us, the people whom He created, that we could enjoy the world that He has made. There's nothing terrible about God. He is not an ogre. He is goodness itself. And He wants to share that goodness with us. And He wants us to reflect that goodness in the way that we live. Not only is

[6 : 48] God the Creator, but He is God who communicates with us. And that's a wonderful thing to know that the Creator God is one who can be in touch with each one of us. From the outset, the Bible tells us that God spoke. It was His Word that brought all things into being. And He continues to speak. The writer to the Hebrews tells us in that passage that Callum read that long ago and at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son, that is Jesus Christ. And in the Gospel of Mark in the first chapter, we read of Jesus who after His baptism, after His temptation and the wilderness came into Galilee proclaiming the good news, preaching the Gospel. And the Gospel is a call to each of us to come to God. In His Gospel, the Apostle John speaks of Jesus as the Logos, the Word. God's amazing messenger with God's amazing message to us, the Gospel of His saving grace and mercy. And

He calls in words that Corrie quoted this morning, come unto me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart. And you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. So the God who created us has so made us that we can hear Him speak to us through Jesus Christ and through the Word that He has left for us, the Bible, which is in a way God's last word to us.

God's last word to us before Jesus will come again, as He surely will. So God created us, God speaks to us. But now let us look back at these words in Isaiah chapter 65 and verse 12, for they're very sobering words and they tell us a very sad but familiar story. And that is people's response to God's call. God says, I called, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not listen.

It's a very depressing fact that these words are so typical of people, not just where they're typical of that generation who lived long, long time ago, and I say as they, but they're typical of people in every age and at every stage of life. God calls, but nobody listens to Him. In the Old Testament, the prophet Amos tells us that he found the same thing in his ministry and he shows us what a terrible thing it was for people to live, resisting the call of God. Time and again, he says in his book, you did not return to me, he was speaking the words of God. God saying he had called, but they did not return to him. In chapter 4 of Amos, he reiterates that six times just to show us what a persistent blocking of the word of God was on the part of the people. And then because of their persistent refusing to listen to the voice of God, the prophet tells them that God was going to send a famine to them. It wasn't a famine of food, it wasn't a scarcity of water, but it was a famine of hearing the words of God. The silence of God came upon them.

In the Gospel, John at the beginning of his Gospel in chapter 1 and verse 11 tells us that Jesus, the great Word from God, came to his own people, but his own people did not receive him. They refused to listen to him. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus told a little parable of a king who prepared a wedding celebration for his son. Everything was ready, they sent out the invitations, but nobody came.

[13 : 51] They ignored what the king had sent out to them. Is that your reaction when God calls? I called, but you did not answer. I spoke, but you did not listen. Where do you stand with regard to that this evening? Because when we think of how God has called and we don't listen, there's a warning in scripture that comes to us, and that is when the patience of God runs out. We've thought about God who has created us and enabled us to hear when he speaks. We've thought about people not interested to listen, but there is a day coming when God will speak a very different kind of word to us if we persist in ignoring his voice today. Remember that passage in Hebrews which we read, it says, long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he is spoken by his son. In the Gospels in Matthew chapter 17, we have an account of what we usually call the transfiguration of Jesus. When something of the glory of heaven shone through the divine person of Jesus and he appeared in the glorious person that he really is, both God and man. And we read that at that time a voice came from heaven which said, this is my beloved son, listen to him. God has spoken to us through Jesus Christ and we must listen to him. But what happens if we don't and if we persist in rejecting the voice of God, the good news of God in Christ, the saving grace of God if it falls on our deaf ears?

Let me take you back to the Old Testament passages again. Matthew 65 and verse 12 says, when I called, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not listen. God had already said to them at the beginning of that chapter, I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask of me. I was ready to be found of those who did not seek me. God is waiting. He's listening for our call to him, but they rejected it. So he says in a very solemn part of verse 12 there in chapter 65, that judgment of the severest kind would come upon them because the patience of God ran out. The persistent refusal to listen brought the judgment of God. When Amos preached and the people refused to return to God, he finally said to them these ominous words, prepare to meet your

God, O Israel. The prophet Jeremiah spent a lifetime weeping over the people who persistently refused to hear the voice of God. He says too, when I spoke, you persistently did not listen, and when I called, you did not answer. Therefore said God, I will cast you out. Now friends, you might be tempted to think, well, that's all Old Testament stuff. Jesus doesn't do things like that. God doesn't change. Just as God still calls us to listen to him, to listen to the Lord Jesus, the day will come when his patience will run out and judgment will indeed fall. Listen to this.

It's Peter in his second epistle. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, but his patient towards you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance and have eternal life. But he says the day that is the judgment day of the Lord will come. And in Romans chapter two and verses four and five, the apostle Paul wrote, do you presume on the riches of God's kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart, you're storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. You see, God doesn't change. We ignore him in our folly and realizing how he, not realizing rather how he longs for us, longs for us to come to him, to know the good news of the gospel, to find his love in the midst of our harsh and soulless world and to find salvation for all our sin. Never think that God is an ogre or someone to be shunned or to be shut out of your life. If you do that, you're missing.

You're missing the reason for which you were created, which was to know God, to love God, and to walk with him day by day, enjoying his company and finding him the best friend you could ever have. So where are you when God is speaking, calling us this evening? He awaits you and will respond to you in love, in grace, and in sheer happiness, because we are told that there's joy among the angels in heaven when even one sinner repents and comes to know the Lord. I trust that if you do not know Jesus as your savior this evening, you will come and respond to him even this very night and find in him the Lord you need. Amen. Let's pray together. Eternal God, we thank you for the gospel. We thank you that you still speak to us in the words of the gospel.

[23 : 28] We thank you that Jesus still calls us to himself and we pray that it will not be said of us that when I called you did not answer, when I called you did not respond. May we hear your voice tonight, Lord, and come as you bid us to come for Jesus' sake. Amen.