

Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

“They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then he looked up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, ‘Ephphatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’ And immediately his ears were opened, and his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.”

—The Gospel of Mark

By Ken Woodley

There are times—too many, I’m afraid—when I am just like the deaf man in this story. I cannot hear the voice of God telling me that I am loved.

Honestly, I think many, if not all of us, experience this deafness from time to time in our lives.

The world has deafened us to the small, quiet voice within us. We can no longer hear it. Our head and heart and our soul are filled with the world’s shouting about anything and everything but God’s love. And we don’t even know it.

We believe that we are still listening to God’s voice of love. We haven’t stopped praying. We haven’t stopped reading scripture. We haven’t stopped our meditation and contemplation. We’re still going to church. We believe we’re just as tuned in to God’s frequency as ever.

But we are not.

The world has become too loud. Sometimes, I think, I mistake something that the world is saying as being the words of God.

But God doesn’t talk to me like that. God never says those sorts of things about me. Words that may make me feel good about myself but don’t bring me peace. Words that might feed my ego and my need for affirmation but are the equivalent of drinking Diet Love or Love-Lite.

I should know better.

There is a distinct difference between the way God assures me that I am beloved and the way the world says, ‘I love you’ one minute then withholds affection in the very next heartbeat, telling me that I am not good enough.

When I am deafened to God's voice of love, something else happens, too. Just like the deaf man in the Gospel of Mark, I develop an impediment in my speech.

My voice begins to sound more like it has been taught to speak by the world. I am too prone to mimic the world, rather than articulate the true speech of love that God tries so desperately to teach us by assuring us we are loved. That all of us are.

Truly loved by true love. A love that never demeans or seeks to diminish or lure down false pathways. That never says, 'I love you' one minute and then throws you into the recycling bin.

When I recognize the sound of the world speaking in my own voice, I understand that it has happened again—I have become deaf to God's voice of love. I have closed myself off to that voice of love and begun listening only to the world, and without even realizing it.

And so I cry out to that love and for that love as the world seems to gather its breath so that it can blow all of that love away. Even the tree limbs begin to sway in the gathering breeze.

It is then that I can suddenly discern that I am no longer hearing the wind in the leaves but, instead, the sound of Jesus sighing beside me. And then he leads me away from the gathering storm.

"Be opened," he tells me, when we are alone. "Be opened and receive God's love. Be opened and speak plainly of God's love. Do not let the world close you up and away from me."

And so I am here. With you. Speaking of love as plainly as I can. And listening. Listening with all of my heart.

