



I was talking with a friend the other day about growing up in 80s. You know the 1980s; big hair, metal bands, the first CD's, VHS tapes and encyclopedias. One of the big things that we remembered about growing up was all the waiting. Yes waiting. We had to wait for things. We waited for letters to come in the mail. We waited for our turn on the telephone. We waited for information. We waited to learn new things.

Now, in 2016, we don't seem to have to wait for anything. The other day I was having lunch with my wife and toward the end of our meal I had planned to order some take out lunch for our kids. So I got up from where I was sitting and went around the corner to order and the line was super long. So guess what I did? Instead of standing in line, waiting, I sat back down, downloaded the restaurants app, ordered my take out, and on our way out picked up my bag of food. I never had to wait. Amazing!

One of the most frustrating things that we do as human beings is to wait. Ever had to wait for a health diagnosis? It can be excruciating. One of the reasons why do don't like to wait is that we are usually waiting to hear something, some news or information that we need in order to make plans or to know what's coming so we can make some sense out of our world. And in the waiting there is this silence that can be overwhelming. Maybe the only thing humans dislike more than waiting is the silence that usually comes with the waiting. So what we typically do when we experience that silence is try to fill that silence with all kinds of things. Let's take the health diagnosis example. What do you think most people do when they are waiting for a health diagnosis? They turn to google, or bing, or yahoo. They begin to search for answers on their own, trying to find something or someone that will fill that silence. And what they usually

find is not helpful, or is distracting and leads them down all kinds of rabbit holes that are filled with scary things.

In our scripture text today we see an entire group of people who in the midst of their waiting tried to fill the silence as well. They were the Israelites. Moses had led them out of Egypt; they had an amazing encounter with God whose presence was revealed on a mountain. It was such a strong presence that the people were frightened and asked Moses to be their mediator, their representative. So Moses ends up being the voice of God for the people. And in order to be that voice, Moses had to meet with God. So Moses goes up the mountain to meet with God and the people wait for Moses to return. It's in that waiting that the silence comes and instead of asking "google" to fill that silence they ask Moses' brother Aaron to fill that silence. Let's pick up the story here. Read Exodus 32:1-14.

I find it interesting that when we read this text it can be very easy to judge these Israelites. I mean, c'mon, how impatient are these people? Well probably just as impatient as a guy who doesn't want to stand in line to order his kids food. But if you peel back the story just a bit you'll find that the Israelites were pretty anxious during this time. They had just been led out of Egypt and every step of their journey they had either a pillar of smoke or a pillar of fire leading them. God's presence and God's voice, through Moses, had always been there. And they would soon be traveling again. But where is Moses? Where is God's voice? Who is going to lead them? So in the silence, they in affect, try to recreate God's voice, but it's just another rabbit hole filled with the scary reality of idol worship that would lead them away from God.

So the people act, and in their desperation they end up slipping back into the slavery of paganism, of idol worship and they break their covenant, their word, with God. God sees what they have done and is not cool with it. Not at all. And then God's reaction... seems just as desperate as the peoples. You see, God had been waiting too. God had been waiting for the people to get to the mountain, to enter into a covenant, to become their God. And God had filled that silence with laying out plans, dreams and hopes for the people. It was as if God was at the jewelry store picking out the wedding ring and just as God walks out of the store ring in hand, heart filled with love, God sees the people cheating. Are you kidding me? This is too much, and God is on the brink of breaking the covenant too, breaking God's word with the people. But we are in a sermon series that helps us to identify the heroes in these stories and

this story is no different. There is a hero and his name is Moses. And it's a good thing that Moses shows up because the whole thing is about to fall apart. Let's reread this part again. Read Exodus 32: 9 – 14.

So Moses, the hero, saves the day and Moses does it by breaking into the silence that God was experiencing as well. Let's return to our bibles. In Verse 10 God tells Moses what? Take a moment and underline the phrase – leave me alone. When does someone usually say “leave me alone”? Usually after they've been hurt. And God was hurt and God is about to enter into silence as well. But Moses won't let it remain silent. Moses will not let God sit alone in silence. Moses does not imagine a God who is distant, a God who is silent. Moses imagines a God who is present in his time and in his space, a God who cares deeply for the people and a God who would be moved to compassion by the voice of the people.

Moses, who was the voice of God to the people, now becomes the voice of the people to God. Write in your margins “radical – the people have a voice!” People actually matter to this God. God responds to the voice of the people. This God is not distant. This God is present in our time and in our space, a God who deeply cares for us and a God who is moved to compassion because our voice matters.

So, what happens to us in those times when we don't feel God's presence with us? Sometimes God can feel distant. We wait for God's voice and in the waiting silence comes and we try to fill that silence with all kinds of idols. Money, success, drugs, violence, power, political figures we treat like gods... you name it and the people have tried it. People are really good at filling the silence with golden calves.

So how do we seek God in the silence? I want to suggest three ways. The first is to let Moses teach us again. How does Moses seek God in the silence? Moses reminds God of the promise that God made to God's people. But in reminding God of the promise, Moses also reminds the people of the promise. This golden calf story was told over and over again to every generation of Israelites to remind them that they were a people of the promise. God's promises are for them. And we are a people of the promise too. God's promises are for you too. In your bibles underline the beginning of verse 13 and write in your margin “Remember me.” When you find yourself waiting in the silence for God's voice open up your bible to this verse and pray – remember me.

The second is to follow Moses's example. Moses spoke on behalf of the people. Moses interceded for the people. We can be that same intercessory for others and others can

be that intercessory for us. If you know of someone who is seeking God in the silence please pray for them. Pray as fervently and as boldly as Moses prayed. Believe that God will meet them in their time and in their space just as God met those Israelites, not with wrath and evil but with compassion and mercy. This is one of the great gifts of being in a small group – others surround you with prayer, others are that voice for you when you lose yours.

And a third way is to welcome the silence. Don't ignore it, don't run from it and don't fill the silence with golden calves. Acknowledge it and expect that in the silence you will find out more about yourself than you would have expected. Welcoming the silence invites us to be more patient with ourselves and others. Welcoming the silence helps to remind us of our deep need for God. Welcoming the silence helps us regain perspective and changes us so that when God speaks we can actually hear God's voice and not just our own desires. Awhile back, Pastor Jeff taught us the welcome prayer and how we can use that prayer as we deal with issues of grief and loss. That welcome prayer also works in midst of the silence as well. So to end our time let's pray the welcome prayer, welcoming the silence, trusting in a God who does remember us, a God who meets us in community, a God who is present in our time and in our space, a God who cares deeply for the us and a God who will be moved to compassion by our voice.