

**Learning to listen to God** (sermon on 8<sup>th</sup> January from Georgia Condell)

**Welcome**

Think of a time you think God spoke to you or share an example of how God spoke to people in the bible.

**Worship:**

Listen together to 'Speak O Lord' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubRIJj8xkds>

**Word:**

On Sunday Georgia used this well-known account of the wise men's visit to Jesus to help us understand how we can learn to listen to God more. As we read Matthew 2: 1-12 think about how these non-Jewish, not necessarily religious men are guided by God and how they respond.

**The Magi visit the Messiah**

<sup>1</sup>After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup>and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'

<sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup>When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup>'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written:

<sup>6</sup>"'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for out of you will come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'

<sup>9</sup>After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup>On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Learning to listen to God is part of our journey of faith. It is a journey we are all on & no one has 'arrived' until they see God in heaven.

In ancient times astronomy & astrology were one, not separate.

The magi or wisemen were not practicing Jews, they were not looking for a messiah.

God longs to speak to us.

### **1. How did God speak to the wise men initially? (v2)**

God spoke to them in a language which they understood-the stars, something familiar to the wisemen. They found the new star and researched and explored what it meant. God often speaks to us through what we are familiar with eg. nature. Jesus often spoke to people where they were at (eg. the Samaritan woman at the well John 4) before taking them further in their journey of understanding.

### **2. How did the wise men respond?**

They were curious and wanted to know more. Do we take the time to just sit & work out, what it is I am feeling & sensing. If we want to hear from God, we are going to have to make space for him & be curious?

### **3. How did they try to find this new king?**

Through logic & reasoning- they went to the palace, asked questions, invested time & expense. Georgia said it is important to wait on God. A time to confirm what we have heard, seek counsel from other Christians, work out relationships, repent.

The wise men don't do this, they endanger the king they seek by going to Herod's palace. God over rules.

### **4. Who then helped them find out more? (v3-6)**

The prophets & scribes. It isn't the star that leads the wisemen to Bethlehem, it is the Jewish scribes who search scripture to find the answers. If we want to hear from God, then we need to be reading & studying our bible regularly.

### **5. How do they respond? (v 10-11)**

With joy, worship & generosity. They offer gifts & are overwhelmed with joy . If we want to hear from God for our own benefit, or for a plan or anything else Georgia thought we are less likely to hear from God if we are seeking him for our own ends rather than if we want to worship him. I'm not so sure this is my experience - more that, in extremis God has met with me but that has led me to worship God.

### **Witness**

If God wants to speak to us in a way we can grasp; in nature, in the quiet, in busyness, how can we be more aware/present to these interactions?

We need to be open to God.

Learn to wait.

Pray in receiving mode rather than making requests.

Be fully attentive & available to God.

Read (or listen to) the bible regularly (daily if possible)

Check our motives.

### **Pray**

**Thank** God for ways he has spoken in the past.

Say sorry for when we miss hearing from him & repent of why & how this happens.

**Please:** Ask God to show us what would help us to be more able to hear him. Perhaps share this & ask others to keep you accountable to do this in the weeks ahead.

**Next week** there is a prayer meeting on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup>, 7.30-9pm for anyone who can make it. If you can't make it, please find some time to pray for Dan, Nick (warden) & Tracy (deputy warden) & the PCC as they listen to God about how the church should be moving forward in 2023.

**Extra notes**

How God speaks to us today (Dreaming with God, Bill Johnson 2006, Chapter 4).

Scripture-the word and the Spirit

Audible voice- external & internal

Still small voice of God

Visions-external & internal

Dreams-daydreams & sleeping dreams

Hidden sayings-parables, riddles.

Unusual coincidences/circumstances

Prophecy

Testimony

Senses