



## A Word from Pastor Craig

When I returned from my sabbatical in Scotland, back in 2018, one of the more memorable questions asked of me was, “Did you spend time in silence?” Being in another part of the world lends itself to practicing ways that do not necessarily come easily to us, in our daily routine. During those weeks I spent time, both in solitude

and in silence, especially when I was on the Isle of Iona, that somewhat mystical island where Celtic Spirituality has its Scottish roots.

Phillip Newell, who was a chaplain at McMaster University when I was a student there, wrote a book titled, *Listening for the Heartbeat of God*. The title is taken from a scene in the last supper, recorded in John 13:23 (KJV) “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.” Can you picture John with his head on Jesus’ chest, close enough to hear his heartbeat? Silence is a spiritual discipline which encourages us to seek God’s presence — God’s heartbeat as we journey through life.

I remember the days immediately after the birth of our daughter, holding her close, letting her rest on my chest, and in those moments, sensing not only an emotional closeness, but a truly spiritual connection to this new soul with which God had gifted us. Oh imagine the blessing of taking the time to sit in the stillness and silence, waiting on God! Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in *Life Together*, writes, “Silence is nothing else but waiting for God’s Word and coming from God’s Word with a blessing...Real silence, real stillness, really holding one’s tongue comes only as the sober consequence of spiritual stillness.”

Inner silence, suggests Thomas Merton, in his book, *Thoughts in Solitude*, “depends on a continual seeking, a continual crying in the night, a repeated bending over the abyss.” God is eager to be heard in our lives. How eager are we to listen for his voice?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers us an important insight: “We are silent at the beginning of the day because God should have the first word, and we are silent before going to sleep because the last word also belongs to God.”

Practicing the spiritual discipline of silence allows us to honour and receive God's Word. In Isaiah 30:15 we read, "This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "Only in returning to me and resting in me will you be saved. *In quietness* and confidence is your strength." This fourth week in our Lenten journey, perhaps it will be the true silence that will allow us to hear what is most important.

I invite you to spend some time this week, in silence, with the Word of God found in these passages.

Revelation 3:20-22    Mark 4:1-20    James 3:1-12  
Ecclesiastes 5:1-3    Psalm 46    Matthew 26:17-30