

*Be still and know that I am God*

– Psalm 46:10

One of the things I most enjoy about Sunday morning worship these days is the “listening bell” that I do with the children. “When you hear the bell you put your finger up,” I tell them at the beginning of our short time together each week before they go down to their Sunday school class, “and when you can’t hear it any more you put your finger down and listen for the silence.” It works every time. They listen intently to the bell, which I strike with the little wooden striker, and they keep listening as the silence settles and the ringing fades away. Whatever lesson I give is secondary to the silence. “In silence we meet the reality of the inner voice from God,” writes Morton Kelsey in *The Other Side of Silence*. That’s the lesson, really. I’m hoping with practice the children, and all of us, might learn to listen to that inner voice from God, or at least sense the holy possibilities of quieting our own voices and the relentless noise all around us.

We live in a very noisy world. Even most of us who spend our days surrounded by rolling farmlands rather than the bustling city are rarely in silence. Machines of one sort or another hum and buzz, or roar and clang noisily; electronic music or voices of news or talk shows come to us from various screens and speakers in our cars and homes and workplaces and stores and doctor’s offices and wherever else we go.

A newsletter comes to my email inbox each month from an organization called “Friends of Silence.” The newsletter carries their slogan at the top: “Is there enough silence for the Word to be heard?” If God were to want to speak to us, would we hear it? When our lives are filled with noise, there is no room to notice the quiet mystery, the secret reality of God around us and within us. Jesus, we are told, “often withdrew to deserted places and prayed” (Luke 5:16). Where are your quiet places, and how often do you go there?

Even in quiet places our minds may be filled with the chatter of our own inner voices. But with

practice we may learn to still our minds sufficiently to know the Presence and hear the Word that may be heard when our own voice is no longer speaking. It is like listening to the stillness of the bell no longer ringing. God is what remains when all else fades away. God is most noticeably present when all else is absent or put aside because God is ever present in the quiet core of all that is present, all that exists all the time.

Put your finger up when you hear the noise ringing in your head and all around you, and as you put your finger slowly down let go of the noise, quiet the soul of your self, and listen for peaceful Presence and maybe the whispering Word that can be heard in the silence.

May it be so.