

SABBATH THOUGHT 2022-01-22—COMMUNICATION

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

We live out in the country. Some nights, especially in the winter, when I go outside it is completely quiet. No wind blowing, no leaves rustling, no crickets chirping, no birds singing, no traffic—nothing. No sounds whatsoever. For some, it would be unnerving but for me, it is utterly peaceful. I can hear my heart beating and my breathing—even my thoughts seem to be the loudest thing around.

There is one thing that is never in short supply in this world—noise, especially talking. It used to be that the world communicated primarily by books, letters, newspapers, magazines, etc. To reach people throughout the world required thoughts and ideas to be written or printed and it took time for these materials to reach their readers even if, like newspapers, they arrived the next day. It was also a quiet means of communication. When people are talking, there is rarely a pause to have time to think. Reading, on the other hand, is silent. I can pause, whenever I choose, to think about what I read.

Nowadays, everyone has a platform for instantaneous communication—Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat, TikTok, Snapchat, Pinterest, Twitter, Reddit, Quora, and a dozen more ridiculous and obscure names. What is profound is the number of people using them. One statistic showed that the top 17 social media sites serve over 17 BILLION users. That over **twice** the world's population! How can the world have that much to say?

At least when communications were through printed media, authors had to write with an economy of words if, for no other reason, than more words meant higher costs to print and ship. Today, however, words are free and unrestrained and everyone has an opinion that they thrust upon the world. Everyone has something to say and thinks the world owes them a platform from which to speak.

There is, odd though it may sound, a benefit to being limited how much of something can be written. Too much information muddles the message. Perhaps this is the reason that the apostles did not write everything that Jesus did: “But there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I do not suppose that even the world itself could contain the books that would be written.” (John 21:25). In fact, not all of them even felt it necessary to write an epistle that was included in the New Testament. There are no writings by Andrew, Thomas, Simon the Zealot, Philip, or Bartholomew. Apparently, the other authors covered everything we needed to know so they spent their time in doing the works of God.

But today, few understand how to communicate anything meaningful. Even the workplace has changed. In the past, except for small meetings, most information delivery

formats consisted of a few speakers who were selected to present to an audience. My first presentation was on a stage in an auditorium filled with hundreds of people. I was, to say the least, quite unnerved. But given the platforms we have today, no one has to experience stage fright. They do not have to look into the eyes of an audience of their peers and take care with what they say. It does not matter if it is true or useful. Today, the expectation is to just speak your mind even though this is usually a very bad idea. Perhaps the most irritating thing is that people are extremely emotional about everything they say—usually in anger. We used to call those “rants” but now they are just hidden behind “free speech.”

But the workplace has migrated to Teams, Skype, GoToMeeting, and other communication platforms. Usually, everyone is encouraged to speak so that they can feel they are a part of the team. Oddly enough, I never felt I was part of a team just because I could say whatever I wanted whenever I felt the urge. Instead, teams were built upon trust and working together. A team was forged by solving problems and accomplishing the goal. The cornerstone of every team was the leader. Nowadays, it is hard to figure out if anyone is in charge. But I’m getting off topic...

Meaningful communication means eliminating emotion. Writers rarely resort to emotion to cover a topic, at least in times past. They tried to be rational and reasonable; focusing on the facts. It was left to the reader to fill the emotional void with the hope that their response was in agreement with the content or that the reader would learn something useful.

Another benefit of the written word, was the author took the time to comprehensively cover a topic without interruption. I cannot remember the last time I watched the news when a guest was not interrupted by the host. These days, it seems the host spends more time commenting on the topic rather than listening to the expert who has to listen while hoping for a pause by the host. Worse yet, some media platforms limit the number of words (i.e., Twitter). No one can soundly discuss an important topic in 280 words so the posts consist mostly of insults and indignant comments.

With all the talking going on, who is actually listening? Who can hear those voices that have something truthful and meaningful to say? They are drowned out in the sea of noise. I imagine it is like someone yelling “fire” at a rock concert. Only those directly next to the person might hear the warning but the rest are lost in a meaningless and mind-numbing clamor of sounds.

What the world cannot hear above the din of their angry words is the voice of God. There must have been a lot of noise even in the days of the apostles because sixteen out of twenty one of the New Testament epistles opened by asking blessings of peace from God upon their readers. Unlike the world, God is not yelling to make the world hear Him. He has given this world up to their own ways and is watching and waiting—except for those few He has personally called through the quiet “voice” of His Holy Spirit. Out of need or

curiosity, they are drawn to a book authored by God Himself—the Bible. It explains things, answers many of our questions, and constructs a picture in our minds of a place wherein there is peace unencumbered by a world of people all talking at once. I long for the time when Romans 3:19 is fulfilled: “Now then, we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so **that every mouth may be stopped**... .” It will be a time when people are finally silent and can listen to God’s voice. Not just hear. To listen, from the Hebrew perspective, means to hear what is said, understand what is said, and then act on what is said.

Sadly, most will have to be forced to listen to God. When Jesus Christ returns, He will rebuke the world for all of their selfish and meaningless talking:

PSALMS 50:3, 16-17, 19-21 Our God shall come, and **He shall not keep silent**; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him. ... 16 But to the wicked God says, ... 17 Yea, **you hate to be taught**, and **you cast My words behind you**. ... **19 You give your mouth to evil**, and **your tongue frames deceit**. 20 You sit; **you speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son**. 21 These things you have done, and **I have kept silence; you thought that I was like yourself**, but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes.

Can you imagine what it is like to be God and hear everything that the world says? Is it any wonder that God shields Himself with clouds to drown out the noise of this world?

LAMENTATIONS 3:44 You have covered Yourself with a cloud that our prayer [*and meaningless talking*] should not pass through.

People will one day be silent because God has something to say. The most important message the world will ever hear. In that day, all the world be silent:

Zechariah 2:13 **Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD**; for He has risen out of His holy dwelling place."

Sadly, the world will not cease talking on its own. It will require dramatic intervention by God. It all begins on the Day of the LORD, when the world will be forced into silence. It is a time when God will no longer be silent and what He says will be heard the world over. Perhaps this is the reason even the angels will cease talking when the seventh seal (Day of the Lord) is finally opened:

REVELATION 8:1 Now when He opened the seventh seal, *there* was silence in heaven *for* about a half hour.

The good news is that after the Day of the LORD will come a time of peace and quiet as the world learns to listen to God. It will be like going outside my home on a quiet winter night when it seems I could hear someone whisper from the next hillside. It will be a time

when people will finally hear, listen, and consider all that God has been saying for the last 6,000 years. Can you imagine it? People sitting in silence waiting to hear what God says? No more meaningless talk obscuring their hearing. No more noise distracting their minds. Just truth that brings the peace of God upon the hearers. What a day that will be when the scripture is fulfilled:

ISAIAH 32:18 And my people shall dwell in **a peaceable home**, and in secure dwellings and **quiet resting places**.

May God fill you with His peace and grace!

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