

Still, Small Voices

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon 'Still, Small Voices' explores the profound strength found in God's gentle guidance amidst societal chaos and personal despair.

Duration: 36:42

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:11-12, Psalm 46:10, Proverbs 12:25, Proverbs 15:23, Isaiah 30:15, Isaiah 41:10, Malachi 3:16, Luke 2:10-14, Philippians 4:7, Colossians 3:16

Topics: "Gods Sovereignty", "Spiritual Encouragement"

Description

This sermon from 1 Kings chapter 19 titled 'Still Small Voices' emphasizes the power of a small, still voice of God in times of discouragement and spiritual conflict. It highlights the need for believers to find strength and encouragement in God's quiet confidence, even amidst societal chaos and opposition. The message urges listeners to be ambassadors of God's power through speaking words of hope, peace, and faith to one another, trusting in God's sovereignty and provision.

Transcript

Good morning, Times Square Church. God bless you. I'd like to speak to you this morning from the Old Testament, 1 Kings chapter 19.

A message entitled, Still Small Voices. Still Small Voices. God bless you, and I trust that this will be a wonderful holiday season.

If it doesn't seem that way to you this morning, then let's believe God that it will be. Let's trust the Lord together. We have great reason to rejoice.

Christ is coming soon. He's coming home for us. Thank God.

Father, I thank you, Lord, with all my heart. I thank you for the anointing of your Holy Spirit. Thank you, God, for unlocking your word today and showing us a source of power that's not visible to the natural eye and can't be heard by the natural ear.

But for those of us who belong to you, Lord God, you are unlocking a way of strength to us for the future, not only to receive but to be sources of strength. Father, we thank you so much for this. Thank you for your word for this gathering, the time that you give us to praise you and to encourage each other.

God Almighty, let your name, Jesus, be glorified in our midst. Let our hearts be gladdened. Let your kingdom advance.

We believe for this with all of our heart, and we thank you for it in Jesus' mighty name. 1 Kings 19, beginning at verse 1, And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.

And when he saw that, he rose and ran for his life and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree, and he prayed that he might die. And he said, It is enough.

Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my father's. Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and there was by his head a cake baked on coals and a jar of water.

So he ate and drank and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came back the second time and touched him and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you. So he arose and ate and drank and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights, as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

And there he went into a cave and spent the night in that place. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him. And he said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah? So he said, I've been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts.

For the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life. Then he said, Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord.

And behold, the Lord passed by on a great and strong wind, tore into the mountains, and broke the rocks and pieces before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake.

But the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire.

And after the fire, a still, small voice. So it was when Elijah heard it that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Now, this was a season of intense spiritual conflict.

Very much like the day I believe that you and I are living in today. It was a moment where the secular power was so bent on the eradication of the worship of the true God that not even the report of a supernatural outpouring could deter it. Evil can get into the hearts of men to the point it really doesn't matter.

The fire of God could be falling in churches on every street corner. But humankind, apart from God, wants to be God in itself and is so determined that it will be God, that it will seek to eradicate, to destroy everything that looks like the testimony of the living God. Elijah, the servant of God, became discouraged at this point to the point of depression.

He just witnessed an outpouring of fire with shouting and worship. Remember, the fire of God came down on the altar that he built and consumed the sacrifice and the stones and even the wood and the water.

Everything was consumed by the presence of God.

When the people saw it, they cried out, the Lord, he is the God. The Lord, he is the God. It had been a day of incredible conflict, seemingly, being swallowed up in victory.

An incredible, victorious spiritual warfare. And it was so glorious and it was so intense that even the godless King Ahab was astonished by it. And he drove back to his palace, as it is, and told his Queen Jezebel all that had happened.

But it wasn't enough to change those in power who were determined that godlessness should rule. We're living in a day very similar to this day. There are people who are determined in our society that godlessness should rule.

Now, in Elijah's mind, there must have been a thought, where can we possibly go from here? The fire of God had come down. The contest on Mount Carmel had been won. And the thought that must have been in his heart, when he finally just subsided to the top of a mountain and said, God, I've had it with this.

I've had it with this, what's going on in our society. I don't think there's any power that can possibly be greater than what we've just witnessed. You know, there's always this prayer that people pray in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Oh, Lord, send your power again. And we all have a vision of what that should look like. The glory of the Lord, as in Solomon's day, perhaps.

We'd love to see that come down into the temple. We'd love that old-time baptism of fire with shouting and shaking in the house of God. And all of these things, in measure, have had their place.

Just like the fire that came down on Mount Carmel had its place, it had its moment in history. But there was an entrenched lawlessness that was so deep now in the hearts of so many that it wasn't going to be changed even by the report of God's power falling again. And I can empathize with Elijah.

The hopelessness that gets into the heart. If you love God with all your heart, have you ever had a moment that you just would rather get out of here? You'd rather go home? You'd rather just say, God, I'm just sick and tired of the sin in our streets. I'm tired of the evil speech.

Even on our news programs, I'm just tired of the dysfunctionality of society all around. I'm tired of evil being called good and good being called evil. I'm weary of the vilification of those who walk with God, being cast out as marginalized and bigoted and out of touch and unreal and unkind and unlovely.

And no matter what happens, no matter how glorious the power of God has come, been in our midst today or yesterday, what power could possibly be greater than what we've just witnessed? What more can be done to convince this generation? That had to be in the heart. I can't say for sure, because the scripture doesn't tell us. But knowing something of the heart of those who stand for the Lord, I can empathize with this man, and I know in measure what would have been in his heart.

What greater witness could we have? And has society come to the point where it can't be turned? Society is becoming so evil. Elijah would have said that I just want to go home. I just want to go to heaven now.

Please, oh God, he said, take my life. I don't want to live here anymore. I don't want to be here anymore.

I don't want to witness this anymore. I want to go to that place where the scripture says there's no more sorrow, there's no more sighing, there's no more crying, there's no more disease. No liars are there.

There's only the worship of the true, the real and the living God. Elijah might have been in a place like many of us from time to time get to. I thought and I hoped that my life could make a difference.

But I don't know what more I can do. What power could be greater than fire? What could give me the strength to go on? It seems that my strength is becoming less and less every day. And I think that's the testimony of many people who want to live for God.

We face such incredible opposition in the realm of the spirit but also in the natural realm, in a generation that's turning from God. I want you to know that my prayers are with you, the elders of this church, those who have to go into work environments where it's very hard for you to stand. It's very hard to endure the scolding, the lies, all the cursing of God that you have to endure every day.

I want you to know we stand with you in prayer. You're not alone out there. Thank God.

And the Lord said to Elijah, go stand on the mountain before the Lord. And the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the rocks and broke them in pieces before him. But the Lord was not in that display of power.

And after that, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a small, still voice.

I can't help but wonder, as I read this passage of scripture, was God showing Elijah something more powerful than all those things he had come to associate with the power of God? You know, if somebody called you tomorrow and said, come to our church, the power of God has fallen. Well, you would have a natural impression of what that looks like. You would expect it to be something so powerful, another Pentecost that's breaking all the hard hearts and pieces before God.

You'd expect another outpouring of fire like on the day of Pentecost. It's true, and these things have their place in the kingdom of God. But what was God showing Elijah? Is there something more powerful in certain seasons than all of those things that he had come to associate with the power of God? The Lord passed by him.

And this is, in this man's life and ministry, this is what he had come to believe the power of God was, a power of God's divine breath that could break anything in its path, the power of God's presence and fire that could consume anything that was presented to him and before him, the power of God to shake the earth and cause fear to come into the hearts of people as he did when Christ died on Calvary, the scripture tells us the earth shook and even a hardened centurion looking at these things said surely this was the son of God. But then God comes with a power that Elijah didn't expect, the power of a still, small voice, a still, small voice. That means in the natural, in the original text, it means something calm, something not grand in the sight of man, something to the casual observer that's not associated with greatness or power.

Listen to what the prophet Isaiah said to his people in a time of spiritual declension. In Isaiah chapter 30, verse 15, let me read it to you. For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in returning and rest you shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

But you would not. In other words, I wanted to give you a peace that passes understanding. I wanted to bring a quietness into your heart when everybody is yelling around you, when everybody's accusing, when everybody's raving, when everybody's looking for somebody to blame, when everybody is searching for an elusive society that cannot be found apart from God.

He said I wanted to give you quietness and confidence. Even though everything around you, at that time, of course, for Israel, everything around them was looking like it was going down and going down quickly. But I wanted you to come back to me.

He said I wanted you to have confidence in me, but you wouldn't come. But you said no, we'll flee upon horses. Therefore you shall flee, and those who pursue you will be swift.

One thousand will flee at the threat of one, and the threat of five you shall flee. Until you are left as a pole on the top of a mountain and as a banner on a hill. Therefore the Lord will wait that he may be gracious to you, and therefore he will be exalted, that he may have mercy on you.

For the Lord is a God of justice, and blessed are all those who wait for him. And here's what the Lord was saying to his own people Israel at this time. Do it your way.

Try to find strength any way you think you can find it. But when you've exhausted it, and when you've finally discovered that you have no strength inside of yourself, that your own plans, mannerisms, the things that worked in the past maybe are not going to work in this hour. He said I will wait for you until you've exhausted all your efforts, even righteous efforts, and I will be gracious to you there.

In a place of graciousness. In the original text it means a place where the strong and the weak negotiate. And the poor and needy are shown kindness.

He said when you finally run out of gas, I'll come to you. And I'll speak to you. I'll speak to you in a soft, quiet, confident way that will settle your heart and give you the strength to go forward.

There is such incredible power in a small, still voice. I remember years ago when I was pastoring in Canada we bought our first church for a dollar. And God gave me a vision of what he was about to do.

And actually it did happen. But we were renovating this building. And you know what it's like when you have a passion in your heart and you want to do something and you're trying to convey it to other people and they embrace it for a season.

And I remember we set out to renovate this church and there was a lot of work to do. And day one there was probably 50 people there working and I'm looking and I felt almost like Solomon when he's building the temple. This is awesome.

This place is going to glorify God. Day two there's 45. Well, five must have had to stay at work a little late today.

Day three there's 40. Day four there's 30. Day five there's 20.

Day six there's 10. Day seven there's three. Day eight there's me.

And I remember standing in this building and I was looking at all the work that needed to be done. And this particular day I was the only one that was there. And my heart just sank inside.

And I said, oh God, can the people not see what you're about to do? How long will it be before the culture of North America escapes this what's in it for me attitude, even in the house of God? How long will it be before the people really fully understand what God has put into our hands at that time? A testimony in an area that had no testimony of God for almost 100 years. How long will it be before they see and the discouragement of trying to lead people that were seemingly not laying hold of what God had spoken in my heart. And I remember the discouragement that came into my life that day.

I remember my hands starting to go down, my heart starting to sink, and the thought coming into my life, is it really worth it? Is it really worth all of the work, the effort, the push, everything to get this done? And it was one of the low points of the early days of ministry for me. Suns, it was coming around the time of the end of the day and the sun was going down. And I looked up and it was kind of dusty in the air because we were doing a lot of work and there was a lot of sawdust in the floor.

And I remember these two little old ladies standing and the door was a big arched door and I could see them standing in the door with the sun behind them and they started walking towards me. Now they were frail. They were old.

I mean, they're really, really old. I'm old, but they were old. And they were so old that they had to hold each other up and they kind of shuffled towards me.

And I wondered what this was about and then in a soft, small, still voice, one of them said to me, Pastor, you're doing a good job. The community is not the same since you came here. Don't be discouraged.

And then one of them took a \$50 bill and put it in my hand and said, They never attended the church, these two ladies, ever. They were Christian ladies, but they attended another church. They never came.

They lived in another area. But they had felt led of the Lord to come and visit me. And with a very soft, still voice, just said, Don't give up.

And I remember the strength that came into my heart when they spoke, the encouragement that I felt to go forward. In the Gospel of Luke chapter 2, the society was in a time of upheaval. People were clamoring for power.

The Roman Empire had overpowered the testimony not the full testimony, but the place where the testimony of God physically dwelt was being dominated by a foreign power. There was all kinds of social and spiritual noise going on. Voices being raised at every side, clamoring for authority, clamoring for influence, clamoring for the ears of the people.

It was a time of great discouragement for many, I have no doubt, as they're being moved about the country just simply for the purposes of being counted and taxed. I'm sure there was great resentment. I'm sure there were cries in the inns as they read the text of Scripture, cries of, God, where are you? And won't you come in power? Don't you have power to make a difference? Aren't you the God who can come with the wind and divide the seas and make a way for your people to pass through? Aren't you the God who once sent fire through the prophet Elijah and burnt the offering and turned the people back again? Aren't you the God who created all things and can shake the earth? Show yourself, oh God.

Show yourself in this generation. I'm sure there were prayer meetings. I'm sure people were crying out because there were religious and devout people in that generation.

But everyone has a mental picture of what the power of God looks like. But suddenly something comes on the scene that is not seen by the natural eye. It's not understood by the natural mind.

It's not heard by the natural ear because nobody expects that's the way God is going to show his power. Nobody expects that that's the way God is going to encourage his people and give them strength to go forward with all the voices, with the clamoring of Roman hooves of their horses, with the clanging of armor, with the chanting of religionists, with the plottings of those who thought they could overthrow oppression by force. All of this noise and all these things going on.

Suddenly the power of God appears and it's a child's voice. It's a whisper in a manger. It's not a wind.

It's not a fire. It's not an earthquake. It's a still, small voice.

But who can hear it? Who can understand how the power of God works? The religious couldn't hear it. Movers and shakers couldn't hear it. The self-focused couldn't hear it.

The Romans' intent on domineering with power couldn't hear it. And so God went to some shepherds in a field, broke open the veil between time and eternity. Angels burst from eternity into time, singing glory to God in the highest.

On earth, peace, goodwill towards men. In other words, everything you've ever longed for has come. And those shepherds rose up and they went into that cave.

And it would be no more than a baby's whisper. Be no more than something so quiet that everybody had to be quiet to be able to hear it. But the scripture tells us in Luke chapter 2 and verse 20 that the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they'd heard and seen as it was told to them.

To the natural would be foolishness, a small, still voice. The power of God being made known to men once again. Prophet Malachi, near the end of his book in the Old Testament, he spoke about a time that had happened and will happen among God's people in a time of fearful spiritual declension among the nations.

In chapter 3, verse 16, Malachi said, Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another. That's an interesting thing. It doesn't say what they spoke.

The King James Version says they spoke often one to another. Those who feared God, those who thought about his name, those who were concerned about his honor, they began to speak to one another. So what were they speaking? Were they not speaking to each other before this moment in history? What was it about their speech that changed? Proverbs 12, 25 says, Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad.

Proverbs 15, 23 says, A word spoken in due season, that's when it's needed the most, how good it is. Colossians 3, 6, Paul says, Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt. And here's the point.

There is incredible power in confident, calm speech. And you and I must encourage one another now. We must do so.

We don't need the fire. We don't need the earthquake. We don't need the wind.

Listen to me. We need the small, still voice now. That small, still voice that says, All is well.

God is in control of your situation, my sister and my brother. That small, still voice that says, God is still on the throne. Jesus still is the victor.

We are still more than conquerors. We don't need the wind. We don't need the fire.

We don't need the earthquake. Those things are wonderful. And if God should choose to do that, then so be it.

But there's something more powerful than all of those put together, especially in a time of spiritual discouragement and declension. It's that small, still voice of confidence in God. I believe, God, that it will be as it was told me.

Paul said on the ship, As the ship was falling apart, I believe, God, I have been with God. God has been with me. I believe, God, you will not be overcome.

It's that voice of confidence that says, All is well. All is well, my brother. All is well, my sister.

Let the nations imagine vain things. Let them think they can put away the testimony of God. He who sits in the heavens will laugh and have them in derision.

The power of a still, small voice. The power of God being manifested as you and I walk through our day in our neighborhoods, in our workplace, in the house of God, speaking words of confidence in the finished work of Christ. The promises of God.

The keeping power of God. How good God is in the midst of a society that looks like it's falling apart all around us. How faithful he is.

David said, I've been young, I've been old, I've never seen the righteous forsaken or a seed begging bread. You don't have any idea how much power God is willing to pour through your life every day, all day, everywhere you go. Everywhere.

In the workplace, even among those who don't know Christ as Savior. The calm confidence in God. All is well.

All is well. We may not understand it. We may not see it.

We may not fully comprehend the ways of God, but I can tell you, all is well. All is well. God is still on the throne.

The victory is still ours. All is well. Prison doors are still opening.

Blinded eyes are still seeing. Deafened ears are still hearing. All is well.

Promises of God are as good as they've ever been. How about this? I prayed for you last night. I know your situation.

I know what's going on in your home, but I want to tell you, all is well. All is well. You turn your heart to God, all is well.

It's something that this world knows nothing about. In this world, everybody who yells the loudest think they've got the ears of the crowd. How many know the ways of God are completely different than the ways of the world? All is well.

All is well. I was thinking as I was preparing this message this week about times in my life when a soft-spoken word changed the course of my feet, gave me courage and strength. I've been in some great services.

I've been in places where the fire of God did come down. I've been in places where there was an earth-shaking experience with God. I've been there.

But some of the more profound moments in my life were just ordinary people just saying, Don't give up. God is with you. Thank you for what you're doing.

And there was no need for anything other than that because the power of God can be found in a still, small voice, especially now when so many are feeling alone. They're feeling unloved. They're feeling defeated.

People are feeling abandoned. And many, even in the body of Christ, feel like they've lost a sense of future purpose, just like Elijah had. He thought it was all over.

But a small, still voice came to him and said, No, you're still going to affect secular leaders in the future. And you're going to leave a spiritual legacy. There's a young man that you're going to mentor, and he's going to do double what you've done in his lifetime.

That all came through a small, still voice. God encouraged him, and he went on in the strength of that encouragement. You and I, this Christmas, we get to be that small, still voice that causes shepherds to return to their homes and their work with joy.

We get to be the power of God. I hope you see this. I hope you understand it.

The power of God in this season is found in confidence in him. People will ask you now a reason for the hope that is in you when you're sitting there calm in the midst of everyone else stirred and living in crisis. They'll ask you for a reason for the hope that you have.

And I want to tell you there's incredible power in quietness and confidence. I will trust in God. No matter what I see, no matter what I hear, I will trust in God, and if you trust in him as well, you too can have peace.

That is the message that God puts on our heart as believers, especially this Christmas. The small, still voice is our strength. I want to give an altar call this morning for everybody who's not at peace.

You're watching too much news. There's some good news here that you might want to spend some time with. If you're not at peace, I'm going to ask you in just a moment as we stand to just make your way please to the front of this auditorium or between the screens in North Jersey, those that are at home and our annex here at Times Square Church, and let's just pray for peace.

Because Jesus said, Not as the world gives. I give you peace. I give you peace that passes understanding.

Let's not be like the people of Isaiah's day when the Lord said, I wanted to give you quietness and confidence, but you said no. I'm going to figure this out myself. I'm going to find my own way.

He said, okay, do it your way, and when you've exhausted yourself, there's a hill we'll meet on where a victory was won, and I'll speak to you about that victory. When you finally come to the end of trying to figure it all out, I'll speak to your heart, and I'll give you that quiet confidence that God's people are going to need in this generation. All is well.

All is well. Let's stand together, please, and if you'd like to come, and we're just going to pray for peace, especially this Christmas. Peace.

If you're not at rest, if you want peace in your home, peace in your mind, peace in your heart, peace in your family, I want to encourage you, just come. Please just come. Slip out, balcony, main sanctuary, just come, and we're going to pray, we're going to believe for that peace that passes all understanding in Jesus' name.

Wouldn't it be something to go to work this week and say to everybody, you've got to come to our church. The power of God has fallen. And people will say, well, what is happening? We're all speaking softly to each other.

We're speaking words of hope and encouragement and faith to each other. God is doing something so profound. He's opened our ears to something that this society can't hear, and our eyes to something they can't see.

That God manifests His power in a time of depression with soft speech. Amazing. Amazing, just absolutely amazing.

Just words of confidence. You have an opportunity now to be ambassadors of the power of God. Just to tell people, it's going to be okay.

You touched in God, it'll be all right. Turn to God, He'll give you strength. You believe God, He'll bring your children home.

Turn to Him. And especially those that are discouraged to be able to say, your life is not over, Elijah. There's much left for you to do.

You will still have an influence in this society, and you'll still make a spiritual difference in somebody's life in the future. There's much to do yet. You've got to get up and go on.

Don't give up, pastor. Community is different since you've come here. Be encouraged.

God had to send a soft voice to me. He could have sent a fire. He could have manifested His glory in that sanctuary.

He could have done it so many ways, but He sent a soft, still voice. That was where the power of God was found in my life. We have a privilege that people who don't know God don't have.

People outside of God's kingdom can't tap into this kind of power, the power of speech. I often believe that when Jesus said, let there be light, it was just a whisper. He doesn't have to yell to get His point across.

He just has to speak. And everything in creation hears Him. Thank God.

Father, I pray for these men and women who have stepped out today and want to be ambassadors of the power of God. Lord, show us, show us, all of us, the power of confidence in You, the power of speaking softly with confidence and quietness, the ability to lift people out of depression and darkness and hopelessness that You've placed within us. God, You chose to manifest Your power through a baby.

That was Your choice. You could have done it any way You wanted to, but You sent the ultimate manifestation of Your power. The ultimate manifestation was through a baby.

God, thank You. Your ways are not our ways. Your thoughts are not our thoughts.

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are Your ways higher than ours. Help us to understand this, that as we go through our day, through this whole holiday season, we can speak the power of God into people's lives. The oppressed can be free.

The discouraged can be lifted up. The captivated can be released. The blind can be given sight.

Help us to see, Lord. Help us to speak often one to another, encouraging words, words of confidence to each other. Help us to understand this.

You are showing us where the power is in this season. Father, we thank You for this. In Jesus' name, amen and amen.

Praise God.

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