

One God. Many Voices.

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Preacher: Joshua Winters

- [0 : 0 0] We're picking up the story of Jesus this morning in John's Gospel, chapter 12. Last we heard, Jesus was deeply troubled in his soul.
- He was wrestling with his thoughts and emotions, with the difficulty of this hour that has now come for him. And at the end of this, Jesus prayed out loud to God in front of the whole group of people, Father, glorify your name.
- And something quite extraordinary and unexpected happened. Then a voice came from heaven. I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.
- The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered. Others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, this voice was not for your benefit.
- Sorry, this voice was for your benefit, not mine. Wow. What a moment. Do you wish that you could have been there, in the crowd, and heard this amazing thing?
- [1 : 2 0] Jesus turns to heaven and prays to his Father, and God, the Father himself, answers from heaven in an audible voice.
- We're going to come back to what God said to Jesus later. But let's talk about the reaction of the crowd. We notice, first of all, that not everybody came to the same conclusion here.
- Some of the crowd insisted that the noise was merely thunder. Not just that it sounded like thunder, but that it was just thunder. Perhaps these are people, in the words of D.A. Carson, who are just less open to observable, supernatural intervention.
- We certainly have those kinds of people in our world today. People who read the Bible, and then they look for a natural explanation to all of the miracles.
- It can't have been God. It can't have been God speaking from heaven. And maybe they were already biased against the possibility that God would actually do such a thing.
- [2 : 2 9] And we should note here that it is exceedingly rare for God to speak like this from heaven in an audible voice. This is one of only three times in the New Testament that God did this.
- The first was at Jesus' baptism. The second was on the mount, where Jesus was transfigured before his disciples. And the third one is here. That must have been thunder, some said.
- As I was thinking about this, you know, we often assume that God's voice is big and boomy, right? Like thunder. Well, there is some basis for that right here.
- God is quite able to make himself be heard in a majestic and powerful and glorious way. But let's not forget that God's voice came to Elijah, the prophet, in a gentle whisper.
- God can speak in all kinds of ways. Or we might say he has many different voices to choose from. And I love to think about this.
- [3 : 4 0] He's spoken through his angels. He's spoken through his prophets, both their mouths and their pens. He has spoken through dreams. He speaks through his creation.
- The heavens are telling the glory of God. Their expanse is declaring the work of his hands. He spoke through Balaam's donkey.

He spoke through the big events near the beginning. And he spoke through the little events and the happenings with his people all through the Old Testament. He spoke through the Bethlehem star at the birth of his son.

He speaks through miracles, signs, and wonders that his power performs. The old standard for home entertainment systems was 5.1 surround sound.

Maybe you had a system like that. You had a speaker in the middle and then you had one on the left and one on the right. And you had a pair of speakers behind you on the right and the left. And don't forget about that subwoofer at the bottom that, you know, really brings out those low tones.

[4 : 54] It makes the sounds in the movie come alive with a richness and depth. Well, forget about 5.1 or 7.1 or whatever we're at today. God speaks through 10,000.1 surround sound.

His word is coming at us from every angle. All creation. Every kind of speaker and voice. Even in this moment here with Jesus, God is speaking through the lips of his own son.

And in the same minute, he's speaking from heaven with an audible voice. From below and above. Surround sound. All at the same minute. We often wonder, Why doesn't God speak from heaven like this more often?

Well, maybe one reason is because God is glorious. And he delights in speaking in all kinds of ways and with all kinds of voices. A subwoofer is great.

The booming thunder voice of God is awesome. But there's more than one frequency in the audible spectrum. And God seems to enjoy using them all.

[6 : 06] But maybe there's more to it than that. Let me ask you. Do you really want to hear the thundering voice of God all the time?

As the norm? Like the Israelites did at Sinai to feel your knees knocking and your heart pounding? As he spoke the Ten Commandments to them?

God could very well thunder at us from heaven every single day. He could speak in the most elegant and sophisticated of heavenly languages that only he knows.

But maybe he chooses to speak through human beings, prophets, and now his son in our language to show us his tenderness and his love for us.

There's maybe a lesson here for us who are parents. We can roar and thunder at our children. We can intimidate.

[7 : 11] But maybe the ultimate way is to get down on their level and use the calm voice. The voice of conversation. The gentle whisper.

Perhaps there are moments to thunder, but maybe they should be quite rare. So some thought or said that it thundered. Others who were there acknowledged that this was a voice speaking words to Jesus.

Yeah, we heard that. Definitely a voice. But it seems that they didn't know who was speaking. Was it an angel? Maybe? And then Jesus himself gives a word of explanation.

Verse 30. Jesus said, this voice was for your benefit. Not mine. It's interesting. Even though the response came to Jesus, and I'm sure it pleased Jesus and encouraged him and was beneficial to him.

Jesus says that the main purpose of this voice was not for him, but for the people standing here listening in. It was like a sign to them. A testimony.

[8 : 18] A confirmation from God to them. That yes, this Jesus, the one who has just been paraded into the city of Jerusalem not long ago as King and Messiah, is the one.

I mean, look. He prays to the Father, to God. And in that very moment, God answers. What an amazing sign and evidence that he is the Son of God.

Now, I can't be sure of this. So take it with a grain of salt. But since God says, Jesus says, this voice was for your benefit. God intended to speak for the people's benefit.

I can't help but think that these people who said that it thundered. It was just thunder. Really knew that it was a voice speaking from heaven.

Did they really mistake God's voice for thunder? Or is this Jesus' opponents and the skeptics trying desperately to cancel Jesus?

[9 : 29] Now, I really do want to talk about what Jesus, what God said to Jesus. And as I was meditating on it this week, I realized there's a whole sermon right here in verse 28.

What Jesus says to the Father, glorify your name. And what the Father says in response, I have glorified it and I will glorify it again.

And maybe you're thinking, oh, come on, Josh. We're never going to get through the book of John at this rate. But let me ask you something. Let's say that you were at a little gathering here in Davidson this week.

Just happened to be a whole bunch of people out bustling around the post office. And while you were there, all of a sudden, God spoke from heaven audibly. And everybody there heard it.

What would your response be? What if like some in the crowd here, you heard clearly, clear as day, what the voice said.

[10 : 28] The words that were spoken. And there were others in the crowd too who were saying, oh, no, no, no, no. That was just thunder. I mean, knowing how often God speaks like this in an audible voice from heaven, would this not be one of the most significant moments of your life?

Something that you'd want to point back to and tell everyone about for the rest of your life? I still remember that day on the sidewalk near Davidson where God spoke to all of us with an audible voice from heaven, you would tell people.

And as you tell the story, people would ask you, well, what did he say? And would you look them in the eye and say, well, you know, it was something about glorifying his name.

I don't know. I haven't really given it too much thought what it means. And they might say, well, I guess it didn't have too much impact on you then.

But cool story. How many of these people, I wonder, left and walked away this day after having the rare privilege of hearing God speak from heaven?

[11 : 41] How many of them just walked away and left, talking lots about it, maybe, but didn't really make much of an effort to understand what God's words from heaven actually meant?

And then I got thinking about this. This way of God speaking, this particular voice that he chose, yes, it was rare. But this response of people happens all the time.

As I said earlier, God speaks in all kinds of ways. He uses a great variety of voices. And yet this response of the people to God's voice happens all the time.

I got thinking, this book, what is it? It's our collection of all the times that God has spoken to humanity in a variety of ways, with a variety of voices that he's chosen.

And I'm not talking about like the little feeling we get in our heads like God spoke to me last week. I'm talking about the undeniable moments in human history where God chose a prophet to be his mouthpiece and spoke through him.

[12 : 53] Or a scribe to write down his words. Or a chronicler to lay out the history of all the times when he intervened in the most tangible and obvious ways, miraculous ways, on purpose to get our attention.

Like this book is our collection of all of those moments throughout history. That's why we call it the word of God. You and I may not have been there that day and heard what Jesus heard and the crowd heard as God spoke from heaven.

But we have the very words recorded right here for us from those who heard it. How often do we think about our Bible sitting on the shelf, the coffee table, the nightstand, in the drawer?

But then we think again, I'll read it later. I've got more important things to do. I've got more interesting things to do. I think I'm going to check Facebook instead.

I think I'll check out the news about the trucker convoy instead. Or maybe we do pick up our Bibles and maybe we do make an effort to read.

[14 : 16] We've got maybe our Bible reading plan open beside and our pen is ready to check off the box of what we read. And we come to a verse like this and we're reading and we say, Oh wow, God spoke from heaven.

I have glorified it and I will glorify it again. Huh? I wonder what that means. I don't know. Let's just keep going.

How's that any different from having been there in person? He heard the voice in person and just walking away and not really bothering to understand what God just said.

Are you catching my drift here? So many times I've been talking with Christian brothers and sisters and often something's come up in their lives and they've said these words to me.

I wish God would just speak to me in an audible voice. Tell me what I need to know for this situation. But if we don't really make much of an effort to understand what we know he has said when he has chosen to speak through human history, what makes us think that an audible voice today would make all the difference?

[15 : 33] The problem is not that God rarely speaks. As we talked about earlier, he's spoken in all kinds of ways. No, the problem I think has to do with us and whether or how we listen.

I think Jesus hit the nail on the head with the parable of the sower and the soils. God's word comes to us like that seed. And for some, it just sits on the surface.

It doesn't sink in. And before you know it, it's gone. For others, it comes to us and we take it in a little bit, but not deeply. And then as soon as any trouble or stress comes our way in life, we just lay it aside.

For others, we take it in a little bit. Seems to be good and things are good are coming from it. But then the worries and the cares and desires of life sprout up all around us and they choke it out.

The problem is not with the seed or the sower, the word of God or the God who speaks. The problem is with the soil, the hearts and the minds of the people to whom the word comes.

[16 : 47] So you want God to speak to you in an audible voice. And then you would really listen and take it to heart. There was another time when God spoke with an audible voice to his people long ago.

Mount Sinai. Maybe you know the story. Deuteronomy chapter 4. Moses is reminding the people about this. Verse 33. This is what he says. He says, Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire as you have and lived?

Has any God ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

You were shown these things so that you might know that the Lord is God. Besides him, there is no other. From heaven, from heaven, he made you hear his voice to discipline you.

On earth he showed you his great fire, and you heard his words from out of the fire. And it goes on. They heard God speak with an audible voice and an awesome visual display from heaven through the fire.

[18 : 21] And yet these very same people were the ones who rebelled against Moses, challenged Aaron, grumbled and complained against God, disobeyed his commands, were kept from entering the promised land and were punished with 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and to die there.

Do you really think that having God speak to you in an audible voice will make all the difference? That then you would really listen and take it to heart? It sure didn't stop these Israelites from ignoring God or from turning away in their hearts from God.

As the author of Hebrews reminds us, God has graciously spoken to us in all kinds of ways. And for our generation and time, God has carefully preserved all that he has said throughout human history right here in our Bibles.

And yet, do we read them? Do we not just read them, but do we think and meditate hard and long over the words that he has said?

Even study them? Seeking to understand them? Trying to get them deep in our hearts? Or are we waiting instead for an audible voice?

[19 : 49] Almost like saying, well, you know, I'll only eat a meal if it's of a certain caliber or quality. And meanwhile, we're starving our souls to death, shoving them full of junk food from the internet.

Do you really think that having God speak to you in an audible voice from heaven would make all the difference? The God who spoke to Jesus here in the hearing of all of them is the same God who spoke through Moses and told him to write down the first five books of the Bible.

Genesis to Deuteronomy is just as much God's word as these words are to Jesus. It's the same God speaking just with a different voice.

Moses, his chosen prophet. The God who spoke from heaven to Jesus right here is also the same God who spoke through the prophet Samuel long ago.

Same God, different voice. And we have the privilege of hearing all that God said through Samuel to Saul and David and the Israelites. The God who speaks here to Jesus from heaven is the same God who spoke through King Solomon as he sat down and penned the Proverbs with the wisdom that God gave him.

[21 : 14] The same God speaking yet with another different voice. And so it has gone. Same God, different voices. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Obadiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Malachi, John the Baptizer.

Jesus, God's own son. Greatest human mouthpiece of God ever. The word of God incarnate, enfleshed.

Enfleshed. And we have everything that he did and said right here. Not everything, but all that we need to see a lot of what we need to see.

The apostles, the writers of the New Testament letters, same God speaking, different voices. Instead of wishing that God would speak to us audibly from heaven like he has to some in the past, we need to realize, we need to open our eyes to see what we have right here.

To see that God has spoken to all of us in all kinds of ways using all these different voices. And it's right here in this most precious book.

[22 : 34] These words were not just for them back then. They're for all of God's people throughout every generation. By God's intention and design, he has preserved them so that we could all benefit from all of those moments.

I mean, think about this. What is your Bible sitting there on the desk, on the nightstand, on the coffee table, on the bookshelf?

It's a phone ringing. And on the other end of the line is the creator. The one who made you. The father.

The one who loves you. The same one who spoke from heaven audibly right here to Jesus. And this is how he has chosen to speak to us today.

Through all those people who lived long ago, who were like us, through his chosen prophets and apostles, through his son. It's like a phone ringing. A direct line to the God who has spoken all through history.

[23 : 48] Are you going to answer it? Do you want to listen to what he has to say in the voices that he has chosen to speak with? Are you going to answer and then listen a bit and just, ah, okay, go on your way, forget about it, not think too much about it?

Are you going to answer it and press that receiver into the ear of your heart and linger and hang on those words and seek to understand them?

What do they mean? What are you saying to me, God? Every day for the rest of your life. Let's not think for a second that we're any less privileged than the people were who heard who heard this audible voice that day.

We know what God said in that moment that day and we have even more. And so that's why we're going to take a whole message next Sunday and we're going to just have a whole sermon right on what God said.

I have glorified it and I will glorify it again. We'll think about what it really means. I'm going to end this morning by reading a portion of Psalm 19.

[25 : 02] More than anyone I know of David, the shepherd boy who became king, he understood this. This is what he said in Psalm 19, verse 7.

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm and all of them are righteous. they are more precious than gold, than much pure gold.

They are sweeter than honey. Honey from the honeycomb. I love these verses. How can this man, David, say such things about the law?

[26 : 18] You ever think about that? About the book of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Refreshing the soul? Giving joy to the heart?

Giving light to the eyes? More precious than a whole lot of gold? Sweeter than honey? I mean, how can you say such things about the first five books of the Bible?

Parts of which we might just say, that's boring, and just skip over it. my answer is because David knows that God speaks here.

These are the very words of God, and by pressing in deeply to meditate on them and understand them and hear what God has to say, he's truly experienced this.

the refreshment of his own soul while reading or listening to Leviticus.

[27 : 18] the joy rising in his heart while reading or listening to Genesis. The awakening of wisdom in his soul while reading or listening to Exodus.

The realization that he has something of ultimate value, more precious than gold while reading Numbers. Something of ultimate desire, sweeter than honey, while reading in Deuteronomy.

Let me ask you something. If you don't see the Bible like that, if you read and hear and feel something totally different than David did about the Bible, who's right?

Who's seeing it the way that it really is? David? Or you? Is David just a flowery poet that's just making things up here?

Is this just different strokes for different folks? Or is it possible that all along you've not been seeing clearly just what we have here?

[28 : 27] If you're not in this book meditating on it deeply, studying it, chewing on it, hanging on the words here, do you know what you're missing out on?

The refreshment of your soul, the wisening of your heart and mind, joy in your heart, discernment, the brightening of your eyes beyond what bars of gold and the sweetest delicacies of earth could do for you?

Let me ask you this. As you look out at the world today, do you feel a weariness in your soul? As you read the news, are you in need of some refreshment in your soul?

David says you can find it right here in the Bible by listening to what God has said. Put down your phone, your tablet and pick up the word of God.

Maybe you're already in your Bible and you've just been having a hard time getting something out of it. I want to encourage you to come talk to me. Maybe you just need some extra resources to help you out. There's all kinds of stuff out there.

[29 : 41] Maybe for you it's the prayer and the relationship with God part that's missing from your Bible reading. There's resources, books, all kinds of things that can help us with that.

Maybe it's distractions and worry and anxiety that's keeping you from really focusing while you're reading and that's the battle that you're fighting right now. There's stuff to help with that. Maybe you could benefit from a good commentary.

A man or a woman who spent years of their lives, studying and meditating on a particular book that you're about to read and you just need someone else to kind of help guide you and lead you into the deeper meanings of what's there, how it applies to your life.

I'd love to help and encourage you however I can so that David's words about the Bible can be your words about the Bible.

So don't wait for the audible voice of God from heaven. Pick up the phone that's ringing on your nightstand. Not the smartphone.

[30 : 45] This phone. Open the pages. Read the book. Hang on every word. Hang on to it like Jacob did when he was wrestling with the angel of the Lord.

You remember what he said? I will not let go of you until you bless me. May we struggle with God and his word like that and prevail with his blessing.

let's pray. Father in heaven thank you for this incredible gift that we don't have to look back and think oh we missed out.

You never spoke to us. You have. Help us all see that. Help us to treasure and cherish your word and to become people who are deeply transformed by it.

A radiant light in this dark, dark world. Lord, I pray this in Jesus name. Amen.