

Can You Hear Me Now?
I Kings 17:8-24: August 8, 2010, 2010
McCabe United Methodist Church: Pastor Rick Fossum

Most of us have seen Verizon's commercial about their cell phone service. It features this guy who shows up in different parts of the country or world armed with a Verizon cell phone in his hand and the Verizon company symbolically standing behind him. He always asks the same question, "**Can you hear me now?**"

The point of this commercial is simple: "**Yes, thanks to our wonderful cell phone technology, you too can be clearly heard all over the world. Sign up today!**"

Verizon knows that hearing well is important. The commercial doesn't say, "**Can you talk now!**" It's hearing that's highlighted. There's a big difference between talking and hearing. Some of you are good talkers and others of you are good listeners. A few of you are good at both. "**Can you hear me now?**"

Did you hear about the two psychiatrists who got together for their 20th college reunion? One is youthful looking, full of life and happy while the other one looks tired, weary and run down. "**So what's your secret?**" the tired looking psychiatrist asked. "**For twenty years, I've been listening to other people's problems every day, all day long, and it's turned me into a tired, old man.**"

The younger looking psychiatrist replied, "**Well, that's your problem. You actually listen to other people?**"

Is it possible to hear words without listening? Is it possible to hear someone talking without knowing what they've said?

A mother told her eight year old daughter to clean up her room ... at least five times. Finally, a few hours later, the room was still a mess. "**Honey,**" the mother said, "**I thought I told you to pick up your room.**"

The daughter replied, "**I'm sorry mom. I wasn't listening.**"

Listening isn't as easy as it sounds. Maybe you know someone who doesn't listen well. Maybe the person sitting next to you this morning is guilty of not listening well.

In our passage today from I Kings, we heard about two people who practiced the art of listening.

First, there was Elijah. Elijah was a prophet. A prophet is someone who speaks for God. Earlier in I Kings, God had told Elijah to go to King Ahab of Israel with this message: **“King Ahab, because you have a number of wives and not all of them are Jewish, God is sending a famine to Israel to punish you.”**

It was a tough message. King Ahab didn't like it and Elijah ended up running for his life. But, Elijah listened. He heard God and he obeyed.

Not everybody listens ... not even to God.

As president, Franklin Roosevelt detested long receiving lines. Have you ever been in a long receiving line? President Roosevelt would always complain, **“I don't like them because no one really pays any attention to what's being said.”**

One day, during a reception, President Roosevelt decided to try an experiment. To each person who came through the line and shook his hand, he mumbled, **“I murdered my grandmother this morning.”**

The guests would nod their heads, smile and say something like, **“Marvelous! Keep up the good work! We are proud of you. God bless you, sir.”**

Finally, a little old lady, toward the end of the line, clearly heard the president. She smiled, leaned toward him and whispered, **“I'm sure she had it coming.”**

There's talking and there's listening and both are essential in any relationship whether it's with our spouses, friends or God. It takes both talking and listening to make a relationship work well.

Back to Elijah. God wasn't through with Elijah. God sent Elijah to Zarephath in Sidon. God told him he would find a certain widow who would feed him. Once again, Elijah listened and obeyed God. He found the widow, but her country of Sidon was also in the middle of a drought and food was scarce. The widow was barely surviving. She had a son to feed and all she had left was a little bit of flour and some oil.

Still, Elijah told her to bring him some bread and something to drink.

What would you do? The widow and her son were starving. Death was knocking at their door. She could have told Elijah to drop dead and find his own bread. But, she didn't. She heard Elijah and she obeyed.

Because she listened and thanks to God, her flour and oil never ran out.

Elijah and the widow both listened well.

How many of us have had to apologize to our spouses because our minds were someplace else when they were talking to us? We hear their words just fine, but we're not listening ... really listening.

Some unknown husband put it this way, **“My wife says I never listen to her. At least, I think that's what she said.”** Are you guilty?

Have you ever been talking to someone and about half-way into the conversation you realize you haven't been listening? You hear words ... blah, blah, blah ... but you don't hear what's being said.

Eva Hart was a survivor. On April 15, 1912, she was on the Titanic when it hit an iceberg that tore a 300 foot gash into the side of the ship. After two hours and forty minutes, the Titanic sank 12,000 feet to the bottom of the Atlantic ocean.

Eva Hart said, **“I saw the ship sinking and I heard the cries of drowning people.”**

The Titanic had twenty lifeboats. They were all launched, but sadly most of them were only part-way filled. Many of the passengers ended up struggling in the icy water while those in the lifeboats waited a safe distance away.

Lifeboat No. 14 rowed back to the scene after the Titanic sank from sight. The people on that lifeboat heard people crying out for help and managed to save a few, but it was the only lifeboat out of twenty that tried.

The other lifeboats floated around in their partly-filled boats, listening to the cries for help, but none of them offered assistance.

Eva Hart, admitted, **“while people drowned in the icy, black waters around us, we were determined to stay dry and make certain no one rocked our boat.”**

Hearing voices cry out for help is one thing, responding to them is another thing. Hearing our spouses or friends or God is one thing, but responding to them is another thing. And this is the difference between hearing and listening. It's our response!

You have a neighbor who needs help and you hear a voice telling you to do something. Do you help them? You know a person at work who is struggling with a problem and you hear a voice telling you to help. Do you help? You get into an argument with your spouse or friend and you're tempted to say something mean and spiteful and you hear a voice telling you not to say it. Do you listen? Your church is having trouble and you

hear a voice telling you to help. Do you help?

“**Can you hear me now**” is more than just a clever slogan. It’s a question you need to answer. Can you hear your spouse now? Can you hear God now? Can you hear those needing your help now? “**Can you hear me now**” is more than a slogan. It’s a question and you need to answer it.