

Empty 3: Known

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

Empty litany adapted from Isaiah 45 (ESV)

Pastor: The Lord says, ‘Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!’

All: For He is God, and there is no other.

Pastor: Only in the Lord, it shall be said of Him,

All: are righteousness and strength;

Pastor: to him shall come and be humbled

All: all who were incensed against him.

Pastor: In the Lord all the offspring of the church

All: shall be justified and shall glory.”

Pastor: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All: Amen

1 Cor 13:8-12 ⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Exodus 33:12-17 ¹² Moses said to the Lord, “See, you say to me, ‘Bring up this people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.’ ¹³ Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.” ¹⁴ And he said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” ¹⁵ And he said to him, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?”

¹⁷ And the Lord said to Moses, “This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.”

John 10:1-18 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶ This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷ So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

I have enjoyed this series and I am so excited for our next. Family Adventure! Church is like a summer adventure. Time of rest and reflection and growth with family. Pr. Dave Nygard will preach on Mother’s day – May 12.

Jesus describes himself and his work since the beginning of creation in this way.

When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.” – John 10:4-5

What a beautiful picture of the church. Have you ever seen the relationship between a sheep and the shepherd? I have seen the relationship between a 4H farmer and her sheep. It is even more trusting and loyal than the cutest of puppies. The life of the sheep revolves around the shepherd.

What a beautiful picture of the church. We are all like sheep being led out into the world completely dependent on the shepherd whose voice we cannot miss despite all the distractions and ambivalence of the world. God has recruited you, he gathers others around you, he goes before you, and in the places he takes you others will fall in love with Him not because of anything you have done, but simply because you are in love with and trust the shepherd. God's [promise to a distracted world.

If there is one consistent struggle, I have had in my prayer life it is that I do too much talking. :) Can anyone else attest to that? I suppose the other would be I don't do it enough, but really that is the same conundrum. Why is it whether in the rush of my day or even when I take time to pray that I spend so much time telling God what I am going to do for Him, how good I am doing or how frustrated I am because things are not going according to plan?

No matter how much I have learned, no matter how close I feel to God, or how distracted and ambivalent I have been it never fails that I find it hard to listen to God. Even in my prayers. I find myself returning to the formula, naming my concerns for one more person, repeating some mantra of thanksgiving or plea for forgiveness ... it is as if my mind does not want to slow down enough to listen to God.

And yet, when I do, when by some miracle my busy mind stops... that is when the intimacy of prayer truly begins. My mind begins to wander, different people pop into my head, memories from nowhere, God starts firing off those little synapses where He wants them to go. If your mind begins to wander in prayer, let it, often that is part of the transition from you doing the talking, to you doing the listening.

Have you experienced this? There is no rhyme or reason to it. For me, it comes and goes, I find myself dreaming about the future, God walking me through a future conversation. Or a memory of His presence- as if to say this is all you need, it really is that simple.

When I stop the busyness of my prayers, when I stop talking, there is this transition... I get honest with God and more importantly I hear that deep, meaningful, loving voice speak love and hope and joy into my heart.

Now if I could make that happen every time of course I would, but that is the thing about listening ... (just think about how we listen to each other, a friend, a parent, or your spouse) you have no control over what the other person is going to say, how vulnerable they are going to get, how deep and meaningful this conversation is about to become. And that is OK. Deep intimate conversations take a lot of energy, they are

transforming, they aren't going to happen every time you offer to listen to a loved one and they won't happen every time you sit down with God.

You can't make it happen... those moments when you hear God's voice and trust him. But you can certainly get in the way of it. And how often do we, precisely in the moment we are hoping to hear God's voice ... how often do we - Talk... :) You are not the only one.

And think about this, if that is the habit and routine your prayer life has fallen into ... you are doing all the talking, then no wonder you aren't looking forward to it, no wonder you aren't making time for it. Perhaps the missing ingredient that would make prayer so important in your life that you protect your daily devotional time... perhaps the missing ingredient is silence, slowing down the mind and listening to God.

And here is the good news. You know God's voice when you hear it. You don't have to wonder was that God or was that me hoping and dreaming for something unrealistic.

John 10:5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

Here is the good news. ...*they will never follow a stranger.* 'Not so'... you say. That is my first reaction... I hear this promise and I start to debate in my head if it is true because this has not been my experience... right... To often I trust in the empty wells of this world, my own plans, my own inventions... in fact that is the problem ... I can't seem to get it right. And even when I am in a good place, I get complacent, I get comfortable

and forget what I was doing in the first place. I am *constantly... constantly* distracted by the stranger's voice.

This may help. Picture a group of sheep, not just one sheep and the shepherd.

... they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice. -
John 10:5

There are two things going on here. Notice Jesus says, 'they.' They will never follow a stranger. There is a power where one or two are gathered. There is reason we gather for worship, a reason we pray and worship together. It is with your spouse, it is with your Christian friend, it is with your *life group* that you will never follow a stranger's voice.

The other part of this promise is profoundly true, although every 'stranger' in the world intentionally or unintentionally challenges this notion. Here it is: You can trust God. And I don't mean believe in Him, I mean you can trust that he knows your heart, your motivations, the way you tick, and He is right now speaking, guiding, loving the world through you.

You know God's voice when you hear it.

We know beauty when we see it, we know love when we feel it, we know truth when it is spoken and demonstrated, we know...

sometimes we kid ourselves, we get stuck in ruts... but we know... We even know when we deceive ourselves and choose to indulge the lies ... we know. We can certainly harden our hearts to this reality ... but there is no denying that - *the heart knows*. Every deep and meaningful experience in life, every

song and story that stirs your emotions, everything thing you would fight for speaks to this truth.

You know God's voice when you hear it.

Do you not... trust... that you know all that you need right now to discern right from wrong!

You know all that you need to know ...to love your family ...to love your spouse, even the stranger in need!

You know all that you need right now to be the person God created you to be, that Jesus gave His life for you to be in this world.

Not because you are some kind of genius, not because you are special, not because you are good at it and practiced it all your life, not because of anything you have achieved or failed at...

You have all that you need, right now and the rest of your life because ... You know God's voice when you hear it. (John 10:4)

You know beauty when we see it, you know love when we feel it, you know truth when it is spoken and demonstrated, ... you know.

⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10:7-11)

Because of Jesus you have come and gone, you are his voice and hands of love for the world, you are safe in the pasture of His kingdom, you have all that you need, He is all that you need.

