

My Sheep Hear My Voice | Mark Proeger

SPEAKER	Mark Proeger
DATE	Sunday, August 13, 2023
PASSAGES	John 10:27-28; John 10:1-5; John 10:14-16; Revelation 3:20; 1 Corinthians 13:9-12; Exodus 19:5-6; Exodus 20:18-19; 1 Corinthians 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 14:1; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Samuel 12:1-13
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:10:45 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus said his sheep hear his voice, and the Bible is the record of God speaking to ordinary people from its first page to its last. So the question is not whether God still speaks. It is whether we are listening — and whether we know scripture well enough to measure what we think we hear.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ If you were convicted of your sin and turned to Christ, you have already heard the Lord's voice. This message is not meant to make anyone anxious about their salvation.
- ◆ God speaks outside of scripture, but never in contradiction to it. Scripture is the plumb line for everything you think you hear.
- ◆ The opposite error is just as real: people who get excited that God speaks and let their Bible collect dust while they wait on a message.
- ◆ In the first twenty chapters of Genesis alone, God speaks to roughly fifteen different people, dozens of times. A God who goes silent at the close of the canon would be a stranger to the book that tells us about him.
- ◆ At Sinai, God wanted a whole kingdom of priests who heard him. The people asked Moses to go in their place — and weeks later they were worshipping a calf.

- ◆ Doubting whether you heard correctly is normal. If your standard is one hundred percent certainty, you will rule out every time God tries to speak to you.
- ◆ “Still small voice” is one occasion out of some two thousand in scripture. God is not limited to a whisper, and he is not limited to how he spoke to someone else.
- ◆ Brothers and sisters who hold the cessationist position are wrong, in Mark’s view, and they are still family. The teaching gets criticized; the people do not get written off.

► 1:10:45

Mark opened by noting, to laughter, that a million announcements seem to happen on his rare Sundays — then told the room how he got here. Forty years ago his mother started going to a Friday night worship service at Hope Chapel, a mile from their house. One Sunday she announced the family was going with her. They never went back to the other church. “I loved God but I didn’t like church,” he said of his childhood. That ended at Hope.

The question

► 1:12:22

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

JOHN 10:27-28 ↗

What does it mean to hear the shepherd’s voice? Mark front-loaded the pastoral answer so nobody would spend the next hour worried. If you came to a place where you were convicted of your sin, repented and followed the Lord, you have heard his voice — audible or not. “But I do think there’s more than that available, and I want to talk about that.”

Spurgeon and the shoemaker

► 1:14:14

He went to Charles Spurgeon on purpose — a Reformed Baptist, theologically solid, 3,600 sermons over forty-two years, ten thousand people coming to hear him by the time he was twenty-two. Not the witness you would pick if you were trying to sound charismatic.

Spurgeon's own autobiography records that he once stopped mid-sermon, pointed into the crowd and said there was a shoemaker present who kept his shop open on Sundays, had taken nine pence the previous Sabbath, and had made fourpence profit on it — “his soul is sold to Satan for fourpence.” A city missionary later found the man reading one of Spurgeon's sermons. The figures had been exact. “Then it struck me that it was God who had spoken to my soul through him. So I shut up my shop the next day,” the man said — and eventually came back, and was saved.

► 1:16:11

Spurgeon added that he could tell a dozen similar cases in which he pointed someone out “without having the slightest knowledge of the person.” Mark read that line and paused on it: “That's terrifying — except that I believed I was moved by the Spirit of God to say it.” Another account has Spurgeon breaking off to tell a young man the gloves he was wearing had not been paid for. The gloves ended up on a table after the service, with a plea not to tell his mother.

The guardrail, said early and often

► 1:18:04

Before going further, Mark set the fence. God never speaks in contradiction to scripture. “God never tells you to leave your wife and marry someone half her age because he wants you to be happy. If you did hear that, it's not God — it's a demon.” And the error runs the other direction too: some people get so excited that God speaks that the Bible starts collecting dust while they wait around for a message. “That is not what I'm endorsing or condoning today.” If you want to weigh God's voice, you had better know the book.

The argument that has been quietly abandoned

► 1:19:22

Mark described the cessationist claim as he was taught it in a junior high Bible class: God wrote scripture through some forty authors over sixteen centuries, then closed the canon and unofficially announced that everything he had to say was now in print. The problem, he said, is that scripture never says that. His teacher sent him to [1 Corinthians 13:9–12](#), where prophecy and knowledge do pass away — “when the perfect comes,” when we see face to face and know as we are known. Even at thirteen he could see it. “These conditions haven't been met. This doesn't describe me at all.”

Twenty chapters, fifteen people

► 1:28:00

Then a fast walk through Genesis 1–20: God speaks to Adam and Eve, to Cain, repeatedly and in detail to Noah, to Noah’s sons, to Abraham three times, to Hagar, to Abraham and Sarah together, to Lot and his daughters, and to a foreign king, Abimelech. Fifteen people in twenty chapters — and that undercounts it, because in [Genesis 1](#) he speaks ten times before there is anyone to hear him. Later he leads a whole nation by a cloud and a pillar of fire. Later still he speaks through dreams, prophets, a donkey, a burning bush, a star the wise men followed, visions, a trance, miracles, judgment, the Spirit poured out at [Pentecost](#), and — the one Mark admits he wants to hurry past — the casting of lots in [Acts 1:26](#).

He also flagged a habit worth dropping. Matt Ryniker had pointed out weeks earlier that God speaks in a still small voice exactly once, out of some two thousand occasions. “Why do we make that the example we harp on over and over?”

The saddest verse at Sinai

► [1:30:21](#)

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

EXODUS 19:5–6 ↗

God tells Moses he will come in a dense cloud so that the people will hear him speaking, and will trust Moses afterward. Then thunder, lightning, smoke like a furnace, a trumpet growing louder, the mountain trembling. And when the commandments have been given:

► [1:33:27](#)

“The people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, ‘You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.’”

EXODUS 20:18–19 ↗

A priest, at its simplest, stands before the people and speaks on behalf of God. God had just offered that to an entire nation, and the nation declined. “One could argue that’s one of the saddest things that happens in the entire Old Testament.” Mark wondered aloud whether the golden calf follows from it. They would not talk to him, and within weeks they were talking to a statue — and getting from Aaron [the funniest lie in scripture](#): I threw the gold in the fire, and out came this calf.

Paul draws the same contrast in [1 Corinthians 12:1-2](#) — you were led astray to mute idols. Idols that do not speak. That is the difference, and two chapters later the instruction is [“earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy”](#). Prophecy is not anointed teaching; Paul has already listed the two separately.

Where all of it is aimed

► [1:38:57](#)

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

[HEBREWS 1:1-2](#) ↗

The most important word God has spoken in the history of the world is a person. And the written word is how we test the rest of it —

[breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness.](#)

Mark named three kinds of people listening: those who hear from God regularly, those who believe he speaks but doubt their own ears, and those who are not trying. He put himself in the middle group, which he found funny, given he was the one preaching. Half his own training was at Dallas Theological Seminary, a cessationist school he loved; some of the teachers who shaped him most hold a view he considers false teaching. He said so plainly, and then said the other half: “They still belong to him. They’re still our brothers and sisters in Christ.” Also, since the standard trips people up — [“if anyone hears my voice and opens the door”](#) — you can hear God and still doubt it was God. If your bar is certainty, you will rule out every time he speaks.

The house on Hampton

► [1:44:53](#)

December 2004, driving through east Austin, not praying, not in a spiritual frame of mind at all: he suddenly knew he was supposed to buy a fourteen-bedroom house he had rented with twenty-some friends back in 1995. “It kind of skipped my brain. I just knew it with my whole body.” The house was eight hundred thousand dollars. He was the college pastor, making twenty-eight thousand a year — possibly less that year, on a pay cut — and CeCe had just found out she was pregnant with Asher, which meant her income was ending.

It sat in him for five months, half certainty and half self-mockery. Some nights at ten or eleven he would leave the car running, walk up to the house, put his hand on the corner of it and say, “In the name of Jesus and for his kingdom, I claim you” — hoping nobody saw him. He was careful to draw the line: this is not permission to name and claim a Ferrari. He asked Hope Chapel to pray, which was its own exposure. They bought the house on June 3, 2005.

A butterfly on the forehead

► 1:50:35

Jack Deere taught at Dallas Seminary and used to mock students who said God led them there. He later wrote *Surprised by the Voice of God*. Mark heard him tell this one in person. At a gathering of a thousand people, John Wimber said there was a woman present with a bad knee that God wanted to heal. Nobody moved. He added that she had flown in from Detroit that morning and had curly brown hair. Still nobody. He added where she was sitting. She finally came — she had excluded herself at every step, thinking surely there were others — and was healed.

► 1:52:56

Afterward Deere asked how he had done it. Wimber said his knee started hurting, and a dress floated across his mind. How did he know that was God? “Because I don’t have a bad knee and I don’t think about dresses.” And what does it feel like? Have you ever had a butterfly land on your forehead and take off again — it is like the footprints it leaves behind. Mark’s point was not the technique. Wimber had spent years learning how God speaks to *him*, getting it wrong along the way. Do not try to reproduce someone else’s wiring.

And sometimes the word is: say nothing

► 1:54:23

A realtor Mark had led to Christ was devouring the Bible, which unsettled his wife enough that she picked a church — one Mark considered to have abandoned sound teaching. Everything in him wanted to say so. “I got this amazing check in my spirit: no, don’t you say a word.” What he said instead was, stay there for now, keep reading your Bible, and let’s see what God does. A year or two later they landed at a solid church in Austin, and she is the one on fire now. “I can’t believe that Mark Proeger just said that.”

Nathan, David, and a God who did not have to

► 1:56:58

The last argument was the cleanest. When Nathan confronts David, David does not need a prophet to inform him that adultery and murder are wrong. He could have recited those commandments in his sleep. Everything he needed was already written. God sent a man anyway — because God is gracious — and David repented, and the relationship was restored.

► 1:57:54

Mark closed on George Wishart, the Scottish reformer burned in 1546, of whom John Knox wrote that he was “so clearly illuminated with the spirit of prophecy” that he foretold things that came upon whole towns and the realm — and said it openly, in the hearing of many. The tradition that produced the Presbyterian church began among people wide open to God speaking. Then he gave the list: read your Bible, submit yourself to God, pursue close relationships with people who are following him, do not isolate yourself, ask him to speak, and be open to how he answers. Test yourself honestly — are you making time to listen, or filibustering God in prayer? “Some of the reasons I have these great examples is because they describe me so well.”

► 1:59:29

His prayer was the message in miniature: thank you that you did not invite us into a dead religion. “Lord, I confess to many times not even being interested in your voice, and I don’t like that, but I’m being honest.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [John 10:27–28](#)
- [John 10:1–5](#)
- [John 10:14–16](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:9–12](#)
- [Genesis 1](#)
- [Genesis 16](#)
- [Acts 2](#)
- [Acts 1:26](#)
- [Exodus 19:5–6](#)
- [Exodus 20:18–19](#)
- [Exodus 32:24](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:1–2](#)
- [1 Corinthians 14:1](#)
- [Hebrews 1:1–2](#)
- [2 Timothy 3:16–17](#)
- [Revelation 3:20](#)
- [2 Samuel 12:1–13](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. When was the last time you would say God spoke to you — and what made you decide it was him rather than yourself?
2. Israel asked Moses to hear God on their behalf. Where have you handed that job to a pastor, a podcast or a book instead of going yourself?
3. Mark said scripture is the plumb line for anything we think we hear. How well do you actually know it — well enough to measure something against it?
4. Which is the bigger risk for you right now: waiting around for a word while your Bible gathers dust, or assuming God has stopped speaking altogether?
5. Wimber learned over years how God speaks to him specifically. What would you have to change this week to start paying that kind of attention?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Mark Proeger has been at Hope Chapel roughly forty years, since his mother began attending a Friday night worship service and moved the family there when he was a boy. He served the church as college pastor, brought his wife CeCe here about twenty-two years ago — she came to faith at Hope — and they have raised their children in the congregation. Half his training was at Dallas Theological Seminary, a school he loves and disagrees with on this subject.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWpJZacZ6BY&t=4245s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.