

Title: THE VOICE OF POWER: THE POWER OF OUR VOICES

Text: Luke 7:1-17

Introduction: Vernon Wayne Howell, better known as David Koresh. He was the voice of lies and the death of many. We must talk about this man because it is the context of where we live, Waco, TX. In April 1993, he caused the death of 76 people, 25 children, two pregnant women and himself. What led this diabolical sect to cause such great misfortune?

The power of the voice: How can a human being manipulate another human being? How is the influence of the voice used to destroy and be misunderstood? This morning I want to lead you through this passage to meditate on how our voices should be directed. As we walk through this new habit of how to use our voices, I invite you to create the divided lexicon, the lexicon that shapes our language giving us the accent, the sound, the grammar, the imitation of Jesus. It is the language of heaven which is the language of recognition, compassion and restoration.

THE VOICE OF POWER MUST BE ONE OF RECOGNITION (v.1-10)

I want to start by defining the word “recognize,” which is: to distinguish or identify a person or thing among several others by a series of characteristics. It is important to know two things when recognizing when we express our words or voices: What do we say? How do we say it? Society has trained us to recognize what we say and how we say it, but they are often engineered. To be a social worker, you must be very clear that you should not take a client’s problems as your own. Society has trained us to be good at acknowledging, but at the same time avoiding what it is involved in acknowledging what we talk about.

The story gives us a context (v.1-3), a soldier, police or security officer. We would say civil laws more clearly. Normally in recognition there is affection, just as the centurion shows affection for his servant. The next thing that happens in recognition is to know, who wants to be recognized? Which is clear to see in this story that the elders of the Jews recognize in a different way those the centurion is looking for and say: “He is worthy that you grant him this ... he loves our nation and built us a synagogue (v.4-5),” but in a strange way because they do not realize that the one they are asking is not someone who does favors but is God Himself. The story has a new direction in which we hear the voice of the centurion now saying: “Lord, don’t bother with me, because I’m not worthy to have you come under my roof ... so I didn’t even think I was worthy to come to you; but say the word, and my servant shall be healed ... I am a man placed under authority, and I have soldiers under me; and I say to this one: Go, and he goes; and to the other: Come, and he comes; and to my servant: Do this, and he does it (v.6-8).” The centurion recognizes the degree of honor and power that the voice of Jesus has. Indeed, he recognizes that it is a voice of power. Then we get to hear from the voice of Jesus, who recognizes through the voice of this centurion that this is a man of great faith and therefore is recognized, and his servant is healed (v.9-10).

In a voice of recognition both parties act. They both recognize. Jesus recognizes who the centurion is through his voice and the centurion recognizes in Jesus’ voice who Jesus is. In this voice of power through recognition there is a divine and human interaction. In this recognition the two sides interact by a divided action. This miracle is the result of a voice of power of recognition. Because where there is recognition of the parties there is a result that humanity needs to be addressed. Because in this voice of recognition, it is not my faith that operates, but

the faith of Jesus. Because we cannot recognize if we do not know God. In this recognition there is only one role, which is the welfare of others. It is in this recognition that faith acts for the benefit of others and not for myself.

THE VOICE OF POWER MUST BE COMPASSIONATE (v.11-13)

I want to start by telling you this story. My friend said that he had left everything in the room he was moving into at the University. All the boxes inside. When he finished, he went to the car to check what else he had forgotten and sat down. In a couple of minutes he noticed that several patrol cars were parked near his car. A policeman through the loudspeaker told him: "Get out of the car and put your hands in the air where we can see them." The police approached him, searched him and put him in the patrol car. After a few minutes they came, asked for his name, asked him what he was doing in the apartment and for his identification. My friend mentions that he showed his U.S. citizen ID, his student ID, and his chaplain ID. My friend asked: "Why did you do this to me?" To which the policeman replied: "We received a call from someone, that a person of color (African-American), was moving boxes from one of the apartments," and the university police had to act.

As human beings we do not come up with words of compassion. In fact, we are vessels that lack compassionate words. Sometimes compassionate words are on our tongues, but they sound rather forced or strange, meaningless at times, but never thought out. What I mean is: really from the heart, heartfelt. I'm with you!

The problem with our voices not being with compassion is that we do not act from our heart and less with thinking. If we act from our heart, this would lead us to an awareness of first knowing who the person is who receives the voice (word) that I am going to express and what I am going to express.

The passage shows us a place in the city of Nain (v.11), an agricultural city, located just at Mount Moreh. This is a town far away from the normally traveled routes. Nain is presented as the context of the forgotten or the ignored. Jesus comes in a situation in which literally the mother, who is as low as she could have fallen in society, is a widow and now her son has died (v.12). Moreover, in this transitional system the detail of this story says that many people accompanied her. The presence of many people does not often say that they are there to help or provide words of encouragement that is needed in this context.

The beautiful thing about the gospel is that: IN THE PLAIN AND SIMPLE THINGS OF A PERSON, the voice of Jesus can enter, indeed, the voice of compassion of Jesus. It makes me shudder when Jesus says: "Do not weep (v.13)." This word of "do not weep" is not a way of saying: "Oh poor thing, what a pity!" But: "Woman, I feel your pain. I'm with you!"

I invite you to think that our voices must be compassionate. Our voices should be thought before they are spoken. Weigh the effect; process by being compassionate. BECAUSE A VOICE OF COMPASSION senses sadness, pain or rejection in order to seek to soothe, strengthen, restore less fortunate people.

THE VOICE OF POWER SHOULD BRING RESTORATION (v.14-17)

How can we find God in our culture? Because in our cultures we have been taught to put up with it, to say nothing, to let it happen and not intercede. That's right! This "That's right!" is an escape from what we should say. They have taught our voices to bring destruction, competition, rivalry with a language of hostility and contempt. Colonialism and capitalism have taught us that nothing good can come out of minorities, what is more, they have not been silent. Beth Moore said, "We are going to have to let the truth scream louder in our souls than the lies that have infected us." In this voice of restoration miracles happen. In this voice of restoration is the visit of God Himself.

The passage takes us to see a casket, someone is dead (v.14). The symbolism of the coffin is that humanly there is nothing more to do. But, something important happens from this restoring voice that says: "Young man, I say to you, get up... He who had died got up and began to speak (v.14-15)." The restoring voice begins with the physical state of the man (we see someone who is resurrected), then the voice heals the social state of the mother for she is no longer the despised of society. The mother has hope after this restoring voice. The restoring voice continues to confirm through the people's statement: "God has visited his people ... Judea and all the kingdom heard of this (v.16-17)." The voice that restores becomes present and spreads. It is this restoring voice that our human mouths need to be more sensitive in knowing how to use.

The restoring voice affects the physical, political and social status that seeks the presence of God himself. For it is in this restoring voice that God is present to open our mouths to teach us to speak more like Jesus. It is in this restoring voice that he speaks life to those who are dead in their voices of destruction and scheming. This is the restorative voice that brings together a society that seeks change, just as the role of the mother who is widowed and childless changes to being a mother who has her child and has the presence of God. This restorative voice spreads to everyone, even though it is thought to be directed only to some, but in reality this restorative voice is for everyone. It is this restoring voice that spreads everywhere and is not restricted by any social, economic or political status.

In closing I want to read a thought from Martin Luther that says: "If I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God, except precisely that little point that the world and the devil are attacking at this moment, I will not be confessing Christ, however boldly I am professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the soldier's loyalty is tested."

I invite you this morning to lift our voices. To meditate on how we use our voices. We need a language of heaven that is the language of recognition, compassion and restoration.

English translation prepared by Editor Eric Black and Alfredo Ballesta, bilingual field coach for Golden Triangle Baptist Network in Beaumont and member of the Noticias Baptist Standard team.