

The voices we hear (Mark 1:1-8)

It is noisy out there.

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For those of us who identify as Gen Xers and elder Millennials, our lives divide up into distinct technological eras.

We grew up on network television, radio broadcasts, record and cassette players, and VHS tapes.

During our teen and young adult years, we became the target market for new technologies: DVDs, mp3s and mp3 players, and file-sharing platforms.

Now we have navigated another shift: into the world of entertainment streaming, where you can divest from physical media and instead pay subscriptions to watch movies and shows, listen to music, download ebooks, and access audiobooks and podcasts.

We are the ones who witnessed the rise and fall of MySpace, the OG Facebook users, the ones who remember when Instagram was only a place for excessively filtered photos and what social media was like before there were algorithms determining what we see there.

No matter what generation we hail from, we currently live in an era where we have access to an infinite array of voices, speaking on behalf of an infinite array of interests.

It is noisy out there, my friends.

Meanwhile, there's another voice competing to be heard amongst the din: the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

John's voice out there in the wilderness is the voice of all who cry out in the wilderness; all those who call out from the margins, begging to be seen and heard and known, begging for their needs to be addressed, begging for their lives.

John's voice in the wilderness is the voice of each trans youth pleading to be seen as beloved and not as a danger. John's voice in the wilderness is the silenced voices of Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, George Floyd, Brionna Taylor, Michael Brown, and the countless others whose names didn't make national headlines. John's voice in the wilderness is the voice of grandmothers aching to release their grandchildren from the grasp of systemic poverty. John's is the voice of those who cannot afford their medications, those who are unemployed, those who struggle to access health care and mental health services.

John's voice in the wilderness is the voice of all who possess neither the wealth nor the power to demand a platform.

Who will we listen to?

When we only listen to the mainstream, when we settle comfortably into our echo chambers, when we surround ourselves with messages that affirm our comfort or defend only our own prosperity—we are not living faithfully when we do these things.

Instead, John calls us out to the wilderness, away from the noise, where we can hear the voices that proclaim the way of the Lord. The way of the Lord is justice, forgiveness, grace, compassion, liberation, and above all, love.

Are we listening?