

[Story] Every ten years, the monks in the monastery are allowed to break their vow of silence to speak two words. Ten years go by and it's one monk's first chance to speak. He thinks for a second before saying, "Bad Food." Ten years later, he says, "Bad rooster." It's the big day, a decade later. He gives the head monk a long stare and says, "I quit." "I'm not surprised," the head monk says. "You have been complaining ever since you got here."

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What would be your two words to speak if you were this monk after the 10 years of silence? Let's be realistic here. How about after 10 minutes of silence what would be your first two words to speak?

When I shared the topic for today's message with my husband Sung who is the man of many words, he said he vividly remembers the day he received the 18 hours of silent treatment from me while driving from Seattle to Los Angeles in a rental car. I also remember that day. I was very upset with him and decided not to say a word since I knew nothing good would come out of me at that moment. He said it was the most difficult "punishment" he had to endure in his life. I will not go into details here. Ask him about it. He loves to tell the story and he is good at it. By the way, his version of the story might be different from my version. Just want to give you a head-up.

If you've been married or in relationship with a significant other any length of time, I think you know what it's like to be a "victim" of the silent treatment. The silence seems to speak far more loudly than any words. The silent treatment is often accompanied by a look, or looks, that could kill someone door knob dead.

The people of Israel got the 400 years of silent treatment from God. It is the period of time between the last of the Old Testament prophets and the arrival of Jesus in the New Testament. It began with Prophet Malachi's prediction of Elijah's return (Malachi 4:5-6) and ended with its metaphorical fulfilment: the coming of John the Baptist.

During this time of silence, God rearranged the scenes of history, much as a stage crew will rearrange the stage sets after the curtain has fallen, and when the curtain rises again there is an entirely new setting. During this time,

- Many Jews had returned from the Medo-Persian Empire and rebuilt the temple, experiencing a moderate level of revival under the influence of Ezra.
- The Jewish homeland was taken over from the Persians by the Greek Empire (332 BC) followed by the Egyptian occupation (312 BC). The Greek language came into common usage during this time, inspiring the translation of the Old Testament into Greek (known as the Septuagint).
- The Jews continued to practice the Law of Moses and the temple rituals until Syria overtook Jerusalem (204 BC). Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the Holy of Holies (the most sacred part of the temple; 171 BC). The Jews, led by the Maccabee brothers, revolted and retook control of Jerusalem (165 BC). The Roman Empire conquered Israel (63 BC), and continued to reign throughout the events of the New Testament.

While these 400 years of silence revealed no new biblical revelation, they clearly included many significant historical events. These included many changes in the rule of the land of Israel as well as the necessary preparations for the coming of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. God rearranged the scenes of history and prepared God's people to receive God's son, Jesus the Christ.

Do you feel that God is giving you a silent treatment now? Like King David in Psalm 13, do you feel abandoned by God and cry out to God saying, "How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?"

If so, please know that God's silence does not equal to God's absence. God is still Emmanuel with you. God is re-staging your life and preparing you to receive a great gift you cannot even imagine like God restaged the people of Israel with the silence of God and gave God's son, Jesus.

Today before us, we have the Table reminding us of the silence of God is not permanent. God's fullness of time had come and God sent His Son, Jesus, to redeem us and show us how much God loves us....*Consecration of the Lord's Table!*