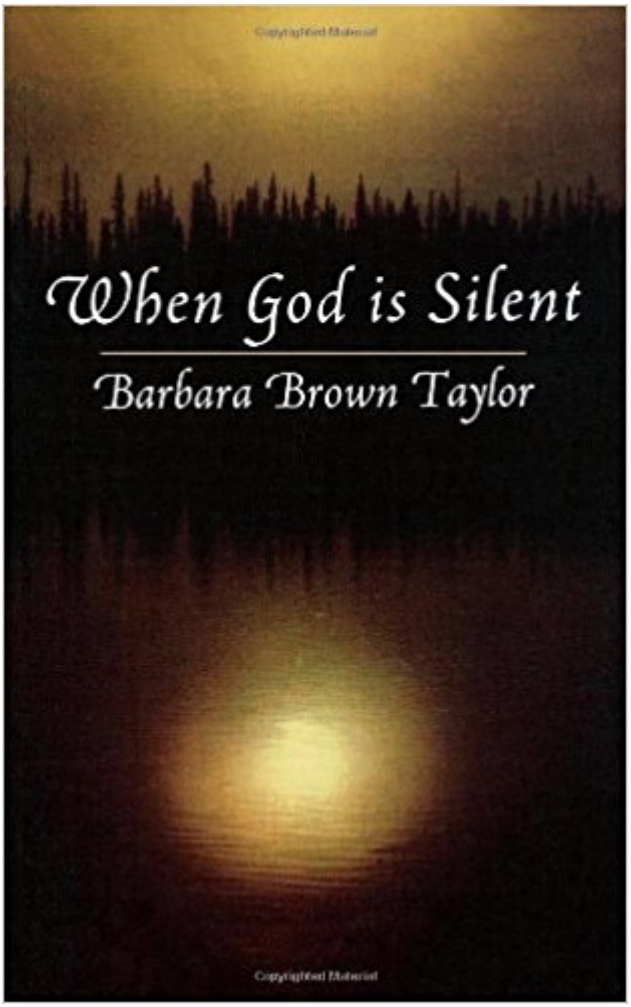
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When God Is Silent (Lyman Beecher Lectures On Preaching)



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Synopsis

Ã¢â ¬Å“Reading of God's silence in the Bible gives me courage to explore the practice of restraint in preachingÃ¢â ¬â ¢not as a deliberate withholding of God's word nor, I hope, as a rationale for my own reticence, but as a sober reaching for more reverence in the act of public speaking about God.Ã¢â ¬Â•In these 1997 Lyman Beecher Lectures in Preaching delivered at Yale Divinity School, Barbara Brown Taylor focuses on the task of those who preach and those who hear sermons in a world where people thirst for a word from God. How may we approach this seemingly silent God with due respect, proclaiming the Word without violating the silence, by speaking with restraint?Her first chapter examines the late twentieth-century language with which we talk about God in theology and speak to God in prayer. The second chapter addresses the question of God's communication in Scripture and how the Ã¢â ¬Å“voice of GodÃ¢â ¬Â• was heard less and less in the land as the centuries progressed. Finally, Taylor explores what the silence of God means for Christians and how we may exercise Ã¢â ¬Å“homiletical restraintÃ¢â ¬Â• in speaking of the divine.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Barbara Brown Taylor's When God is Silent is a gem of a little book. The Lyman Beecher Lectures she gave at Yale in 1997 are presented in an attractive new format from Cowley Publications which suggests that one has picked up something of an art book, something to be cherished. It is a little book both in size and in the scope of the author's intentÃ¢â ¬â ¢but on handling and browsing

through it, the reader become immediately conscious of an economy whose very modesty speaks its worth. . . .From the threads of ordinary experiences which we all can recognize, Taylor weaves something that gives voice to what we have not quite been able to say for ourselves, but something to which we find ourselves giving a deep interior assent. . . . The journey of just 130 small pages is a rich labyrinth of meditationsÃ¢â ¬â ¢on music and silence, on the statistics of our broken world, on the imagination, on the writings of mystics both ancient and modernÃ¢â ¬â ¢all of them serving as gathering places for poetry and insight, reflection and prayer. . . .This book should not be left to preachers alone; it is a handbook for those who hear the whisper of God and want to listen. It is a book about the fragility of our words and the depth of God's silenceÃ¢â ¬â ¢and it is ultimately a book about the music that results from the crashing of our words against that silence of God to carry on its very failure some of the song of God's own music. (Rev. Bruce Jenneker, Trinity Church)Barbara Brown Taylor's concise, pithy and challenging prose is evidence that she is practicing what she preaches: that Christian pastors take more care with the words they use and treat language with economy, courtesy and reverence. . . .All too often, Taylor insists, Christians are part of the problem rather than people who offer an alternative. It isn't simply that the jargon of psychobabble is working its way into worship, but something deeper: a lack of trust in the essential mystery of God's word. . . .If Taylor is eloquent in describing our misuse of language, she is even more eloquent when meditating on the value of silence, on Ã¢â ¬Ëœthe game of divine hide and seek [which is] part of God's pedagogy . . . [making] silence a vital component of God's speech.' She offers concrete and practical suggestions for ways to improve our relationship with both silence and the words God has given us. (Kathleen Norris, author of Amazing Grace)In her 1997 Lyman Beecher Lectures, Barbara Taylor probes the question. . . : In a culture afflicted with rampant word inflation, how can preachers hope to bear effective witness to the Word? . . .Ã¢â ¬Å“The instinctive reaction of many preachers . . . only exacerbates the problem. Perhaps, Taylor hypothesizes, instead of trying to compete with the incessant, empty chatter of the day, preachers should honor and cultivate a space for sacred silence. In broad and deft strokes she lines out the sweep of salvation history, suggesting that Ã¢â ¬Ëœrevelation' has always been as much (or more) a matter of what God leaves unspoken as of what God states.In this book . . . Barbara Taylor has framed a fitting space for further reflection. (David J. Schlafer, priest and consultant in momiletical formation, Bethseda, MD)

Barbara Brown Taylor is an Episcopal priest. She holds the Harry R. Butman Chair in Religion and Philosophy at Piedmont College in northeastern Georgia and serves as adjunct professor of

Christian spirituality at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur. Recognized as one of the twelve most effective preachers in the English language by Baylor University in 1995, Taylor has published numerous collections of her sermons and theological reflections, including The Luminous Web, Speaking of Sin, and Gospel Medicine.

This is a slight little book, size-wise, but I have three times as many highlights in it as any other book I own. It is dense with ideas like a fruitcake is full of goodies.It is targeted toward pastors, but approachable for anyone with a moderate understanding of theology. My mom bought copies for my siblings and I because she found it so meaningful, and I can certainly understand that impulse.Taylor is teasing out what it means that we don't hear from God anymore. God used to talk to the Israelites all the time, but as the Bible progresses, we hear God's voice less and less. She argues that part of this is because we now live in a desert of noise, and we are thirsty for the Word, but can't make it out amidst all the other things we are listening to.I want to share so many quotes with you, but I will settle for a few, to give you the flavor of her language and logic."Without limits, we would have no feel for the infinite. Without limits, we would be freed from our longing for what lies beyond. It is precisely our inability to say God that teaches us who God is. When we run out of words, we are very near the God whose name is unsayable.""At their request, God never spoke to all the people again. Secondary speech replaced primary speech. The pillar of fire and cloud that led the people through the wilderness gave way to a tabernacle they could carry around with them. The hot lava of God's voice cooled into the six hundred thirteen commandments of the law."On a personal level, I was struck by this quote:"Perhaps there is no proof a famine exists except for the fact that people are hungry. In the land of plenty, the source of that hunger can be difficult to diagnose. It is often not until we have tried to ease it with everything else we know that we discover by process of elimination our hunger for God. Our problem is not too few rations, but too many. The proof that we are in the midst of a famine of the Word are the suffocating piles of our own dead words that rise up around us on every side. It is because they do not nourish us that we require so many of them. It takes thousands of words, coming at us every moment, to distract us from the terrible silence within."There is a nutritional deficiency disease called kwashiokor. It is not an overall lack of calories, but a lack of protein and micronutrients. People can fill their bellies with carbohydrates and not feel hunger pangs, but they are still lacking, to the point of death. Her statements here made me think about how we can feel like we are consuming enough to feed our souls, but still not feel safe and nourished.There are some really painful moments of realization for me in this book. Somehow, the image of Jesus on the cross asking for word from his father, and his

father giving him nothing, not bread nor even a stone, was one of the saddest crucifixion narratives I've read.

Barbara Taylor is the pastor I would want in my church. Her writings reflect her understanding of the average, everyday, person. She never seems to talk at people, but always with people, with a caring, understanding heart. Her writings have profoundly influenced my ministry and own spirituality.

This little book is a potential life changer for thoughtful human beings. Taylor is truly wise and witty, and her ideas encourage the reader to look again. I reread this often and I have to keep buying new ones because those who borrow mine also want to reread it. Read When God Is Silent, then enjoy her many other excellent books.

She is a gifted writer and as always this is another great book!

This is the third publication I have read by Barbara Brown Taylor and my favorite read so far. She talks about the noise of the world - a time when communication is of higher value than contemplation and information is more in demand than reflection. The author takes us back to time when God audibly and visibly spoke to man. Taylor says today there are many that puff themself up pretending to know the mind of God when they barely know their own mind. How do we speak in an authentic voice?

Barbara Brown Taylor is a brilliant writer. I thoroughly enjoyed this marvelous volume, so beautifully written. And challenging .. for the would-be preacher! We need a lot more contemplative or 'listening silence' in our lives. On the strength of this volume I have purchased almost all of her other books.

Discusses the change in our relationship with God over the centuries. How can we hear Him? And is He listening to us at all?

Top quality writing showing great depth and spiritual in sight. Highly recommended , it will bring the reader closer into the mysteries only the Holy Spirit can answer. A 5 star work.

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