

WHAT WANTS TO BE HEARD?

When Kelly asked me to give a reflection, my first thought was, Hmm... I wonder what I want to say? Ideas popped up but nothing stuck. And then it dawned on me what I have been learning lately as a writer. I have just finished a draft for another book,, and try to offer a blog post now and then. My writing process would go like this. I'd sit down at my desk, cup of French Press coffee, a candle burning....and stare at the computer and ask... What do I want to say? Eventually words would go onto the page, sentences were well crafted... and... it never felt quite right. It didn't feel like writer's block. One day heading to my desk, a different question slipped inside....

What wants to be heard?

What wants to be heard?

And as I listened for the answer, the words began to flow from someplace deep within. It hadn't been Writer's block... but Listener's Block. Words fell together with an ease, and when they didn't, rather than push forward, I would push my chair back and listen some more.

As I considered this reflection, I began to ask that same question.

“What wants to be heard?”

Instantly, my daughter Haley's blog post came to mind. It took my breath away the first time I read and it still does... the imagery, the simplicity, and the power. And so I decided to trust what I heard in answer to my question. Today's reflection is the result.

In the beautiful biblical story of creation, God speaks the world into being. As I imagine God...standing there in worn carharts, there is a stillness before God speaks, as if God is waiting, listening for that which is longing to be heard. Only after listening, deeply, intently, carefully, does the voice of creation speak. It must have been the deep listening that led to looking out over what had been created, and calling it Tov. Good.

Created in the creator's image, we are all tiny little creation stories, speaking our lives into being. The power of our voice is immense. It, our voice, is situated squarely in between our head and our heart, something I learned from my good friend David Berry who is writing a book on the voices of leadership, and who understands that in order to live and lead well, both head and heart need to be engaged. And it is the voice which connects the two. Curious, he actually measured it and found that on him, exactly 18 inches between his cerebral cortex behind his forehead, and his heart in the middle of his chest, sits his voice box, which speaks his words into the world.

With our voices we all participate in the continuing creation of the not only the world, but also our own lives... Whether the good, the bad or the ugly, creation continues through the power of our voice. With it we come out of closets or lock ourselves in someone else's skin, talk ourselves off the ledge or take leaps of faith, tie a knot in the end of our rope or dig our pits a little deeper, ask for a well-deserved raise or settle for what we are offered, create loving relationships or stay in toxic ones, accuse the rapist in spite of our fear or suffer in shame because of it, ask for help or flounder and fall, ask for forgiveness or defend our transgressions.

What wants to be heard?

It is a question that is both personal and universal. Now, as the baby of the family, it is all, of course, about me, so today rather talk about what wants to be heard out there... I decided to share a couple of stories from my own experience. In the first, I ignored the answer to that question, and in the second one I didn't.

I don't know about you, but for me, high school was a nightmare. Smart, tall, shy and awkward, I did everything I could to fly under the dangerous teenage radar screen. While I loved school, I usually kept quiet in class, even though I almost always had something good to say. College was different. I loved the academic challenge, found myself speaking up in class and couldn't get enough of learning. There hadn't been much direction from my parents about school, and while I loved them both, it is safe to say that my dad's was the most important voice in my life. It was never a question that I would go to college... he just saw it as a great place to find a husband who would take care of me. No need to worry my

pretty little head about things like a meaningful work, a rewarding career or financial independence.

But... My junior year, a favorite professor encouraged me to begin thinking about grad school, and, I did. A masters degree came into view. One day he stopped me after class and asked me if I would teach the class for him on a day when he had to be out of town. My answer.
Hell yes!

Heading back to my dorm to start getting ready, I had to tell someone. Who better than my dad? Almost anyone as it turned out. I called him on the phone, shared my news, knowing that what wanted to be heard. For my professor? Hell yes! My fellow students, even though they didn't know it yet? Hell yes! And, in my own heart... I wanted to hear my dad say Hell yes! You go girl! The phone stayed quiet for Way. Too. Long. "Molly" he said, "you need to be careful not to appear too smart, so that you don't intimidate the boys."
His words took my breath away. Literally.

Taking a deep breath, I stood up as tall as I could and told him I had to go get ready for that class, and hopefully intimidate a few guys along the way. I taught the class.
Graduated magna cum laude
Went on to graduate school, and challenging work.
Married the gentle, smart, handsome science major that loved me for my brain and my own brand of beauty.

I wish that is the story that I could tell.

Hanging up the phone, the only voice I could hear was my dad's, and what he wanted to hear. I called the professor back, apologized that I actually wouldn't be able to teach that class.
Graduated magna cum laude
Stuck my diploma in a drawer somewhere.
Took a job that paid the bills
And married the first undereducated guy who asked.

My words on that phone call to my professor spoke a long, painful detour into being. A destructive marriage to a guy I shouldn't have had coffee with, much less 13 years together, and yet, like all detours, I learned a lot along

the way. Sometimes getting lost where we don't want to be is the only way to find the trailhead of the path to where we do.

What wants to be heard?

As participants in the ongoing work of creation, it is the question to ask of ourselves, listening for that which, at a deep level wants to be heard. It is a question to ask in our relationships, in our families, our homes, our schools, our communities and in the world.

What wants to be heard?

The answer requires developing the practice of Deep Listening.

Deep listening is a process of **listening** to learn. It requires the temporary suspension of judgment, and a willingness to receive new information – whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

(Center for Spirituality and Healing - U of Minnesota)

Jesus was a master at listening for the right message. The woman caught in adultery was surrounded by an angry mob consumed with self-righteous words - They knew what they had to say to her - with their words and with the stones clutched in their fists. Jesus waited. Jesus listened. He asked questions that they couldn't answer. And then Jesus listened some more. After the angry, self-righteous crowd had left, he spoke the words that her broken heart had been waiting to hear... "Neither do I condemn you. Now go, and sin no more."

Not to draw too close a comparison to Jesus.... but when it comes to being a master at listening for the right words for the moment at hand, I have to say Tom comes darn close. We have a tradition in my family around the holidays. After dinner, we push our chairs back, pour another glass of wine, and then my sister or I pose a question for everyone to answer. I'm never sure what the question will be, or when it will come to me... but eventually it does. A few years ago we were all gathered around the table, my generation and the ones that are coming after us, candles burning, wine glasses filled... the question was... "What have you learned this year that you would want everyone at this table to know?" People answered as they were ready, good thoughts were shared and then ... Tom listened, waiting in the way one can when they have a geologic view

of time, having tuned his inner ears to listen for what to share....quietly said... “I’ve learned to love... by listening.”

And that is what it boils down to. In asking the question...

What wants to be heard? We are really asking... What would love say? If we listen deeply, I believe we will be able to hear from that voice deep within, in this situation, in this circumstance... in our own lives, in the hearts of our children or partners or friends.... in the polarized and ugly politics of our country and on our ravaged planet.....What would love say?

What wants to be heard, at a deep and very real level is the TRUTH. The truth spoken in love.

Which of course means that it isn’t always love in that warm and fuzzy kind of way.

Sometimes it is the deeper, harder kind of love that speaks truth into painful places. Like John Metta’s reflection a couple of weeks ago.

Sometimes it means asking hard questions that are waiting for someone courageous enough to ask. Again like John’s reflection.

Sometimes it means turning a bright light on something that has to change.

Sometimes it is speaking truth to power for those who don’t have a voice.

Sometimes it is speaking words that seek forgiveness.

Sometimes it is acknowledging someone else, letting them know that we see and love them for who they are, rather than who we expect or want them to be.

Our voice has the power to heal and to hurt, to create and destroy, to help and to hinder.

Now for my second story. Fast forward 25 years, finding my way to Tom (who is strangely like that gentle, smart science student from my college years), and having had years of meaningful work where I get to teach, and

of course, maybe even intimidate along the way. A couple of years ago, I was at a retreat in Woodstock NY. My best friend and I were there to give a keynote and lead a couple of workshops. It had been two days of connection and inspiration. Important words had fallen on listening ears. Walking back to the conference center to lead a workshop on one of my favorite topics, always a crowd pleaser and one that always changes the perspective of those in the workshop...my cell phone rang. With a few minutes to spare, and seeing that the call was from a client, and a big client at that, I decided to answer. "Hey Molly. We're in a big bind. The person who was going to facilitate the Leadership Experience can't make it. Would you be able to do it? It starts the day after tomorrow."

Immediately I knew the answer to *that* question.... Hell no! I had been trained to facilitate it, but never had. This was going to be to a senior global team, and the facilitator they really wanted was obviously not me.

Stepping into a big arena, trying to fill big shoes, coming in at the last minute, with people who expected someone else, felt like a recipe for disaster all around. Besides that, getting an earlier flight out would be almost impossible due to our commitment to the current retreat. Saying no was only logical. There was one other tiny little detail that I haven't mentioned. I was terrified. Afraid that I couldn't do it, wouldn't meet the high bar set by the group, I respectfully declined, politely thanked him for thinking of me, wished him the best of luck, and hung up the phone and headed back into the workshop. But I couldn't get that phone call out of my mind, and suddenly I remembered that phone call to my professor all those years ago. I knew what wanted to be heard, but once again had ignored it. What the client wanted to hear? Hell yes! What that senior global team wanted to hear, even though they didn't know it yet? Hell yes! And in my heart? Hell yes! You go girl! The second the workshop was over I called the client back. This time I said Yes. I'll be flying by the seat of my pants, but if that's ok with you, I'll take the first plane out and be there."

Fear can keep us from speaking what wants to be heard. Fear of failure. Fear of rejection. Fear of loss, anger, disappointment. Fear of an unknown outcome or response. I forgot to mention that the topic of that workshop was... Courage. You know the old adage.. you teach what you need.

Creation continues. Every day we participate in that ongoing process. And so now... I want to ask you... **What wants to be heard?**

Take a few moments and reflect on that question... without overthinking, without trying too hard.... in your heart, in your home, in your marriage, in your family, in an important friendship, at your workplace, in your community, in your world....

What wants to be heard?

Trust the answers that come to mind.

Connect them to your heart

By using your voice

To speak those words

To the ears waiting to hear them.

And like the great creator, we too will be able to say, "Tov" "Good."

God is still speaking.

And the voice God uses is ours.

