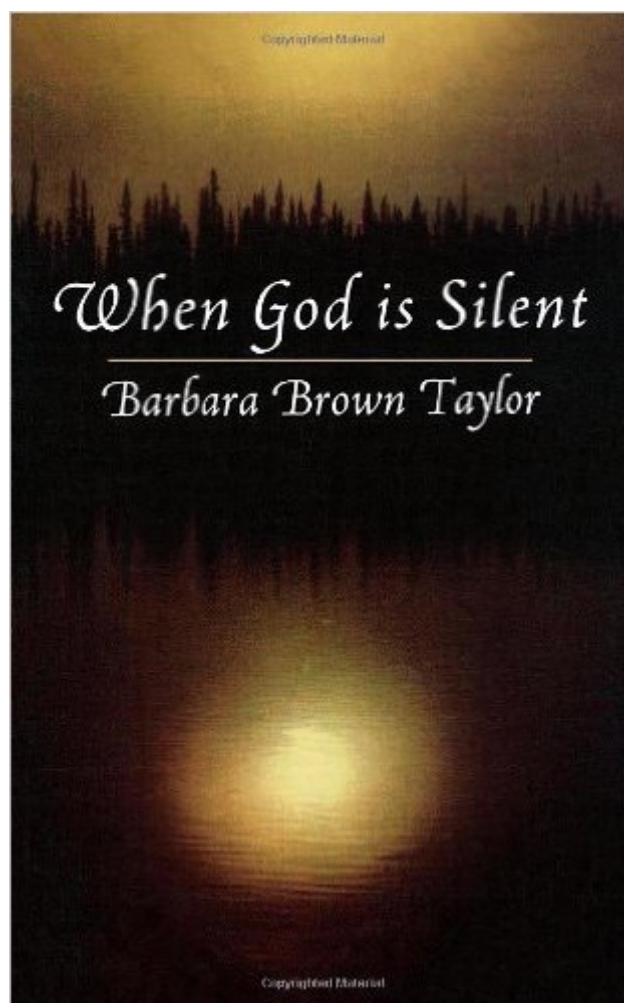


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When God Is Silent (Lyman Beecher Lectures On Preaching)



Synopsis

“Reading of God’s silence in the Bible gives me courage to explore the practice of restraint in preaching—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.” 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 “voice of God” 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 “homiletical restraint” in speaking of the divine.

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Customer Reviews

Barbara Brown Taylor demonstrates her craft as a preacher so effectively that she has earned the title of one of America’s best. In her book *When God is Silent*, Barbara brings to light the difficulty many that preach face as they approach the Biblical text and message. In forthright honesty she gives expression to areas that both teach and frighten a preacher when they are preparing a homily:

famine, silence, and restraint. Taylor speaks to a culture that has become accustomed to its throwaway lifestyle. Words are disposable. With so many words now being assimilated into the English language, our minds are over satiated. This rich diet of fast food newsprint, magazine gluttony, and a blitzkrieg of entertainment television has numbed the ability of words to move and stir our being. In the midst of abundance, we are in a state of famine--a famine that is silent. What do we do when we don't hear the voice of God? Taylor paints a picture of a God who has grown silent in order that we may pay attention. The canvas of silence is one we avoid with all our might. Upon the canvas, the colors are vivid primary tones that our culture tries to dull with noise and activity. Her point is well taken...God is not really silent, people have just muted God out. But she warns preachers to be wary of using too much language to fill voids of silence, for silence is the antacid to settle our indigestion caused by over feeding on our vernacular. What Taylor does best, is allow the reader to reflect on whose word is being proclaimed on Sundays. She uses the old adage of 'less is more' to articulate that holding back on word usage allows for the silence to speak, almost like a ray of sunlight peaking through a cloud covered sky.

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