

Amplifying the Gospel

"Amplify" Series, January 3 & 4, 2026 (Communion) | 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

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Alexander the Great amplified Greece's great voice like a megaphone.

Alexander's empire started as a murmur in Macedonia.

Alexander perfected the phalanx, a massive block of soldiers with four-meter-long, iron-tipped pikes that became one of the most effective and feared military formations in history.¹ With the phalanx, Alexander's armies conquered all the way to the edge of India, scooping up ancient civilizations wholesale. His goal was glory and spreading Greek culture—its philosophy, religion, and politics. His kingdom started as a murmur, but it became a megaphone for the Greek voice.

Like Alexander's empire, sound waves grow when they resonate.

Sound travels in waves. Most of the time, sound dissipates as it travels. If you're far away from the source of a noise, the sound is softer than it would be if you were close. But when the conditions are right, the sound resonates; it hits the body of a cello or the rock walls of a canyon and echoes, getting louder. That's what happened with Alexander. He amplified the voice of Greece. And that, Paul said, is what happened in Thessalonica.

Paul saw the Gospel in Thessalonica grow like a resonating sound wave.

Paul and his team disciplined the Christians in Thessalonica. The results were amazing! The Thessalonians were following Jesus fiercely and multiplying disciples quickly. And Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia, so, once again, a murmur in Macedonia was being amplified! What did Paul do? We want to know. Because we want to BE disciples like that, and we want to MAKE disciples like that. Like Paul did.

The Thessalonians received God's Great Voice eagerly.

God's Great Voice called Paul and his team to Macedonia.

Paul was on his second missionary journey with Silas (otherwise known as Silvanus). Timothy joined the team. Paul was initially retracing his first missionary journey through Asia Minor when he heard the voice of God calling him to Macedonia to proclaim the Gospel. So, they set out for Macedonia. They started work at Philippi where a church sprang up. But so did trouble. God worked miraculously in Philippi despite the trouble, but Paul and the team left and moved on to Thessalonica. It was the next town on the main trading route and an important place to share the Gospel. Acts chapter 17 tells us that the apostles started in the synagogue, sharing the Gospel.

Some in Thessalonica tuned into God's Great Voice with surprising enthusiasm.

¹ Gene Green, *The Letter to the Thessalonians* in the Pillar New Testament Commentary Series, p. 8.

The Gospel took root mainly among Gentiles in Thessalonica, not among the Jewish population. Paul talked about the results in **1 Thessalonians 1:2-5**:

We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

The Thessalonians heard the Gospel as the Voice of God; they saw the power of God working among them and the powerful change it made in the lives of Paul and his associates. They were drawn to God and embraced the faith fully. Paul said that they instantly showed the kind of faith, hope, and love that characterizes the Christian life.

But trouble started and would not let up.

Some of the Jewish people who did not like Gentiles turning to faith in Jesus raised a mob of thugs, started a riot, and made accusations that Paul and his team were proclaiming a new king to replace Caesar. It was sedition, and the local authorities took swift action. Jason, a prominent leader of the new church, was fined along with others. Paul's team left town quickly. But the trouble didn't stop.

Paul ultimately sent Timothy to check on their faith.

Timothy returned with news that astounded even Paul! He hits the highlights in **1 Thessalonians 1:6-7**:

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

The Thessalonians were still imitating the team and Jesus. They were thriving under persecution. They had received the Great Voice of God eagerly and completely!

They amplified God's Great Voice.

Word about their great faith and changed lives hit the airwaves.

Paul recounts what happened in 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10:

For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Thessalonica was the gateway to the entire region.

Thessalonica was built to be a gateway to Macedonia—a deepwater port that linked water trade routes and land routes to the riches of the interior. Even after the Macedonian empire came apart when Alexander died, Thessalonica remained important. It became particularly important and wealthy during the first century. Roads and sea lanes linked it from Rome in the west to Byzantium and beyond in the east. Merchants, soldiers, messengers, philosophers, priests, artists, and travelers went from the

interior in the north all the way to the famous Greek cities of the south. Life flowed throughout the region from Thessalonica.

The Thessalonians blanketed the region with the Gospel.

Person to person, town to town, up and down the roads, across the seas, they shared the news Paul had shared with them. They didn't pull punches; they told the truth about how they had listened to God's Great Voice but how some had been threatened and lashed out. Nor did they mince words; they honestly talked about how they had endured despite hardship. They talked about their recently abandoned lives as idol worshippers and how in Christ everything was different. And shared how that new life was fueled by hope. Jesus who is risen from the dead is King and coming again. When He does, the world will experience wrath, but His disciples will experience resurrection and eternal life. They broadcast God's Great Voice across the airwaves to anyone listening!

In 1 Thessalonians, a few very powerful words describe discipleship.

By the end of this series, we will have encountered 7-8 words that describe the life of a disciple. Today's word is "amplify." It comes from verse 8. Paul wrote that the Thessalonians **"sounded forth"** the Word of God across Macedonia and Achaia. The Greek root verb is **"execheo"**. It means that something echoes outward. But it implies that it grows as it moves. It is amplified. The Thessalonians amplified God's Great Voice until everyone could hear it. Across Macedonia and Achaia, people heard it, and the results were staggering.

Paul said that he and the other apostles "need not say anything".

Is that not mind-blowing to read? Paul is saying that the mission to reach Macedonia and Achaia was largely complete. The Gospel was now available across the region. They didn't need him any longer because they had the Christians from Thessalonica. Can you imagine that being said about our church? About you? That the Gospel in Hartford and Litchfield Counties is safe in our hands? That's an amazing thought to me. But that is exactly what is supposed to happen when we are disciples. Because to be a disciple is to amplify God's Great Voice the way the Thessalonians did.

We echo God's Great Voice.

God's Great Voice is calling out to people to come to Him.

In the beginning, God's Great Voice called creation into being. When we sinned, God's Great Voice called us to repent and obey Him. Jesus is God's Great Voice in the flesh, calling people to come home to the Kingdom of God. Now, as we wait for Jesus to return, God's Great Voice is still calling out through His Holy Spirit to humanity, calling us to be born again as children of God. That's God's mission, the disciples in Thessalonica were caught up in that mission, and we too are caught up in it. It's our mission, too!

We echo like a thumped watermelon, telling how ripe the work of God is in us.

You can tell a lot about a watermelon by the sound it makes. If you thump it and hear a dull thud, then it probably isn't ripe. But if you thump it and it sounds like a hollow drum, then it's probably ripe and ready to eat. You can tell a lot about a watermelon by thumping it, and you can tell a lot about the work of God in us just by the sounds we make. There are sounds we make when we're working; does

our work make the world a better place, and does it bring glory to God? There are sounds we make when we're under pressure; you can hear those sounds come out of our mouths frequently, and they say a lot about how ripe our hearts are with God's work. There are sounds we make when we're happy and relaxed; what we do with our time, talents, and treasure says a lot about what God is doing inside of us. Every day, people were thumping the rinds of the disciples in Thessalonica; the drum-like sound said that God had ripened their souls, and it drew people to Jesus Christ. Every day, people are thumping our rinds—when we do business with them, when we are in traffic together, when they hear what we're doing with our lives. We are echoing, and people are either being pushed away by what they hear or drawn to Jesus because we are ripe.

And, like Thessalonica, we are all gateways to somewhere.

We all have spheres of influence. We have networks where we work—colleagues, clients, and vendors. We have social networks—family members, friends, teachers at our kids' schools, people in our running clubs, and people at art class. We have followers of social media. Some of us have great big networks while some of us have much more modest networks. But we all have spheres of influence. We are gateways to somewhere. You are a gateway to somewhere. Is God's Great Voice amplified in these networks? Or is the sound of silence all anyone hears?

Let's amplify the Gospel like a Magnavox!

A Magnavox loudspeaker amplified Christmas greetings to 100,000 people in 1915.

Inventing duo Jensen and Pridham had created a transmitter that carried greatly improved sound across telephone wires. But their idea was not new enough to get a patent or good enough to reinvent the telephone. The two were close to giving up their work until a relative visited and gave them an idea. What if they could make the sound louder? Like the voice of "Foghorn Murphy" who opened baseball games and rodeos in San Francisco with a bullhorn? Sports stadiums around the country would want one. So, the team took an Edison gooseneck horn from an old phonograph and added it to their receiver. They called it the "Magnavox" or "Great Voice." After months of testing, their excitement grew. And on Christmas Day, 100,000 people gathered in San Francisco to hear a speech by the mayor. 100,000 people heard it clearly, and 100,000 people cheered.² Jensen and Pridham amplified a single voice for many to hear, and they created an industry that has covered the planet with speakers, loudspeakers, announcements, messages, and music. If that's what they did with a single loudspeaker in 1915, imagine what we can do with the networks, technology, and resources we have at our disposal today!

We can amplify God's Great Voice this week.

Pray and ask God to pour out His Holy Spirit on a family member who does not yet know Christ. Have coffee with a colleague; listen to how their life is going and mention one way God is working in your life. Invite a friend over for a meal and ask what God is doing in their life. If someone you know is looking to build a better marriage, invite them to our marriage conference later this month. And share your story whenever the opportunity presents itself. Telling how God has changed our lives comes naturally to us. We're just telling people our story. When we tell our story, we're telling God's Story! We

² Birger Schnieder, *The History of the Invention of the Loudspeaker*, p. 11.

are flooding our networks with our story. Like a loudspeaker filling a stadium. Or a sound system carrying a concert. Or a post going viral on social media. We're amplifying God's Great Voice!

Disciples of Jesus are all mini-Magnavoxes!

We are all amplifiers of God's Great Voice. The disciples in Thessalonica got this fact. Which is why they amplified God's Great Voice across their city and around their entire region. And the same is true of us. We are all mini-Magnavoxes. May God use your voice to amplify His Voice.