

To whom do you listen? It does kind of depend upon who is speaking and when, doesn't it? Parents: sometimes, it seems, as though your children are hearing impaired if they are involved in something else that has their total attention or they just don't want to do what you are asking. Children: you might say the same about your parents.

There are times when we hear **everything** another person says, even if they whisper. I'm not only referring to those occasions when we think someone in the next room might be speaking about us. In the cases I am thinking about we are always listening and ready to respond to whatever the other person says. We are ready to respond to even what we believe the other is thinking. It isn't only a genie who says, "*Your wish is my command.*" Hearing can be very selective.

Can you guess who I have in mind that hears and responds to everything the other person asks? Any ideas? I am thinking of someone who is in love! Have you noticed that before? A young couple in the early stages of romance. They want nothing more than to show their love to their beloved. They believe that whatever their loved one wants will be the best thing possible. It doesn't matter how hard their desire might be to fulfill. When you love, you want what your beloved wants.

Why do I raise this question about listening? Because this is "**Word of God Sunday**"! We believe that God has loved us enough to communicate with us fallen human beings. His Word is never an ineffective word. It is never a past word. God's Word echoes through time. We believe that when we hear the Word proclaimed at Mass or in any Sacrament or Liturgical act God is speaking to us, to each of us.

God has a Word that is always spoken to our heart. A Word of love! A Word of life!

The same God who spoke a word and the Universe came to be; who spoke another word and human beings were made. We can say even more! As we read in the beginning of the Gospel of John, “*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” John goes on to say, “*And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us,..*” So, the word, when it is the Word of God, is more than mere human words are. When God speaks, he communicates His very self!

Recognizing this awesome truth, we need to consider what kind of listeners we human beings have been through the ages to the Word of God. The story from our first reading is a classic example of our typical response. The reading that was proclaimed today tells us part two of the story. You all remember part one. The first time Jonah the Prophet heard the Word from God, you remember how he responded...? He heard God speak to him and he set out in the opposite direction. He got on a boat and ended up being swallowed by a big fish. How often we ignore God’s word or even do the opposite of what God asks!

As both the Second Reading and the Gospel make clear, this is not a game. We are not children who can be excused for not listening from time to time. There is an urgency to God’s call. As St. Paul reminds us in the Second Reading, “*..the time is running out.*” Jesus, in the Gospel, speaks to the same theme. “*This is the time of fulfillment.*” This world, this life is not forever. Whether we are old or young, none of us

know how much time we have. The Lord doesn't want us to live in fear, but we do need to have a sense of urgency. And why wouldn't we want to listen to the Word of this great Lover?

The fishermen, Peter and Andrew, James and John, hear the word of Jesus. That Word calls them to action. They do not ignore Jesus' call. Why do they listen? Why do they respond by leaving their father and their nets? Certainly, this was not an easy ask. Without doubt, it involved a great sacrifice. Following Jesus meant leaving behind their family, their father and their livelihood. But, in a certain sense, their choice was not difficult. They had come to know Jesus. They had heard John the Baptist call him the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world". They recognized his love for them—and they loved Him back!

Like any people who truly love each other, no sacrifice was too great. Consider what Jesus' Sacrifice would ultimately be. For us, he would carry a cross and give the last drop of his blood. How could anyone not listen and respond to the Word of this loving Savior, who is Love Incarnate?

In today's Gospel, Jesus calls us to repentance. Brothers and sisters, the truth is that we all have some repenting to do! God has loved us so! He has shown such patience. God has loved us even when we have ignored His word; even when we have turned and gone the other way.

How blest we are that God has given His love to us, has spoken His Word to us! Like true lovers may we wait upon His Word—and do His will!