

LISTENING AND HEARING

In today's Gospel, we read of how the Pharisees gather to test the Lord. They want to set a trap for Him. They are not interested in any answer He will give, nor the questions He might ask. They have an agenda and it is to trap Him. Too often our interactions with others may not be as open as they should be. How many times do we roll our eyes in conversation as if to say, "here we go again"? How often in an encounter with another do we really care about hearing every word and treasuring it? We live in a society that uses lots of words. There is so much to listen to that is vying for our attention. Yet even when we are listening, do we really hear?

The disciples were preventing the children from getting close to Jesus. Jesus moves past the barriers they set and proclaims that the children are welcome. He says to witness how these little ones enter into the moment with excitement and hope is a doorway to the Kingdom of which those present should take notice. Once again Jesus is inviting His followers and all of us to do more than listen. He invites us to really hear.

There is a difference between listening and hearing. I can listen to a podcast or a Zoom Meeting, but am I really present? Do I take the time to really hear? Hearing involves going past the words. It is the connection of the heart and soul to what is shared. If I asked you when the last time you were really moved by a speech, what would you say? What did it compel you to do? Did it change the direction of your life? Did you hear the prompting of the Holy Spirit to engage with the world in a new way? Hearing involves letting the words penetrate and resonate in our hearts. True hearing is to shake us to the core and reconnect us to our purpose in being. For me, to move beyond listening to true hearing sometimes takes going over the words, re-listening to them until I hear. It takes allowing my imagination to be sparked by the idea or dream that resonates beyond the words.

We all do a lot of listening and are told to pay attention. But what compels us to really hear?



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