

Isaiah 55:3, “OPEN YOUR EARS.” (Midweek Advent I) ‘20

Lord, open my ears that I may hear. Voices of truth You send so clear. And when the words sound in my ear. Everything false will disappear. Amen.

In Jesus' Name, dear friends:

One day a lady (with a hearing problem) and her husband were driving from Illinois to Green Bay. They were pulled over by a state trooper who asked if the husband knew how fast he was driving. The wife asked, “What did he say?” The husband replied, “HE ASKED IF I KNEW THAT I WAS SPEEDING.” Looking at the driver's license the trooper said, “I see you're not from around here.” The husband said, “No, we are from Chicago.” The wife again asked, “What did you say?” The husband told her, “I SAID WE ARE FROM CHICAGO.” The trooper then commented, “You know, the meanest woman I ever met was from Chicago.” The wife again asked, “What did he say?” The husband replied, “HE SAYS HE THINKS HE KNOWS YOU!”

One of life's most humbling realities is that people aren't good listeners. Teachers pause and wonder if the class heard anything they said. Doctors prescribe medicine and the patient walks out without the prescription. Pastors preach their various sermons as if they are talking to the wind. Children regularly fail to do what they're told. One spouse speaks and the other tunes out. Or so it seems. Two men were talking, one day. One of them said, “My wife talks to herself a lot.” His friend answered, “Mine does, too, but she doesn't know it. She thinks I'm listening.”

Perhaps it's not so much that others don't listen as it is our inability to control when they listen. We would like people's full attention when we speak, but life is not that simple. We tend to speak when the clutter of life's events and emotions are at their highest. That's why we so often shout at each other. We are trying to communicate at the noisiest and most intense of times.

No wonder, Isaiah quotes God as saying, “Turn your ear toward Me,” that is, “OPEN YOUR EARS.” (v.3)

1.) To the Word of God. And that is good advice, for this is a time of year when so many opportunities to hear the Word of God present themselves. We have extra services, programs, concerts, social events where Scripture is read, much of it quite familiar. Is

that a problem? Do we feel we've heard it all before? Perhaps to the point where we can almost recite it? Without even thinking?

Does God feel that way about listening to us? Not only to our needs, but also to our confessions? "I've heard *all* this before!" He could say. But instead God says, "Come to Me." (v.3) Like parents of a newborn child -- ears attuned to the slightest sound -- God is listening, intently. Maybe we can learn something from that.

Read those familiar Gospel stories again. They are clearly listed on the bottom of the Sunday bulletin. Read them preferably -- out loud. And be attentive. Is there something here you've never heard before?

2.) To the Songs of the Season. "OPEN YOUR EARS" as the music of Christmas fills the air. The songs of the season are everywhere, in offices and elevators, stores and hair salons, spilling out of the car radio and the home entertainment center.

Just "listen" to the music as it flows around you. (v.3) Just "listen," but be aware that the whole world is awash in songs celebrating: "Frosty the Snowman," "Rockin' Around the Christmas tree," "Santa Baby," "Have a Holly, Jolly Christmas," "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer," "I want a Hippopotamus for Christmas" and "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas." I just named seven popular and frequently played Christmas songs which have absolutely nothing to do with the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. It is easy to become critical of such 'holiday music,' but just "listen" & pray -- pray for those people whose Christmas celebration revolves around such silly and sentimental songs. Besides hearing about all the things to buy on television. They may be happy, but they don't have *the* Joy of the world.

By the way, is some of the music at church a bit different with a more solemn tone -- an Advent tone before the Christmas tunes break forth? Songs urging us...

to be patient = to watch and wait for Christ's Second Advent -- His Second "Coming,"

to repent = to change by forsaking the sins of the world,

to prepare = to reassess our priorities,

to believe = to see Jesus Christ in the center of our celebration and our life.

Appreciate those Advent songs for they have a message to tell. "OPEN YOUR EARS!"

3.) To the Bells. Among the sounds of the season are the bells ringing on street corners and at the entrance to the supermarket and the big box store. The phone rings too with appeals for charity. And the doorbell brings mail with still more pleas for help.

The 'season of goodwill' is seen by many as an opportunity for charity. And well it should be. An innkeeper's ears were closed to the needs of a poor Jewish couple once. But Christ came anyway, in poverty, to make us truly wealthy with His gifts: the gift of salvation -- whereby He lovingly moved from manger to cross and the gift of eternal joy in heaven.

God listens to our needs and from God's point of view whatever we receive is always charity, undeserved, impossible to merit. God opens His ears to us so that our ears might be open to hear the cries of others. Sometimes those cries are as clear as a bell or as striking as St. Paul's words, "As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people." (Galatians 6:10)

4.) To the Good News. "OPEN YOUR EARS." Have you ever thought about the reason you are able to hear "the good news of great joy" which these days proclaim in so many ways? (Luke 2:10)

The reason, quite obviously, is that "the good news" was told...to Zechariah and Elizabeth at first...to Mary...then to Joseph...to the shepherds on Bethlehem's hillsides...and then by the shepherds to all whose would listen. "The good news" was told.

The telling has gone on and on, down through the centuries and across mountains and oceans, rivers and plains...spoken, signed, written, sung, chanted, drawn, sculpted, performed, broadcast and streamed from satellites.

A lot of effort! And why? To make it possible for you and me to hear! What a blessing that we can "OPEN OUR EARS" and "continue to live," God says. (Is.55:3) "Live" to share "the good news" of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. For that is something worth telling and...worth hearing. Amen.