

**THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT  
FEBRUARY 28, 2016**

**"HELP ME TO HEAR"**

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Words of wisdom from the Prayer of the day: *"HELP ME TO HEAR YOUR WORD."*

Words of wisdom from the Old Testament Prophet Isaiah: *"LISTEN CAREFULLY TO ME. INCLINE YOUR EAR, AND COME TO ME; LISTEN, SO THAT YOU MAY LIVE."*

And twice Jesus says: *"I TELL YOU!"*

Listening is probably our biggest problem! We may HEAR, but we do not really LISTEN! We are moving too fast and making too much noise to hear the gentle voice of God. With windows rolled up, stereos cranked up and engines roaring, we have little chance of hearing anything!

A STORY: A young and successful executive is traveling down a neighborhood street, going a bit too fast in his brand new sports car. Who could blame him, with this 3-liter, 6-cylinder, 240-horsepower engine? He is watching for kids darting out from between parked cars and slows down when he thinks he sees something.

As his car passes, no children appear. Instead, a brick comes flying out and smashes into the side of his brand new car! He slams on the brakes and spins around to the spot where the brick has been thrown.

He jumps out of the car, grabs a kid wearing a hoodie and cargo pants and pushes him up against a parked car, shouting, *"What was that all about? Just what the heck are you doing?"* Building up a head of steam, he goes on. *"That's a new car and that brick is going to cost you a lot of money. Why did you do it?"*

*"Please, take it easy. I'm sorry, I didn't know what else to do,"* pleads the young boy. *"I threw the brick because no one else would stop."* Tears are now rolling down the boy's cheek as he points around the parked car. *"It's my brother,"* he says. *"He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair, and I can't lift him up."* Sobbing, the boy pleads, *"Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me."*

The driver tries to swallow the rapidly growing lump in his throat. He lifts the young man back into the wheelchair and begins gently wiping the scrapes and cuts, checking to see that everything is going to be okay. *"Thank you,"* the grateful boy says.

The man watches as the little boy pushes his brother down the sidewalk toward their home. It is a long walk back to his car, a very long, slow, painful walk. He never did repair the side door. He kept the dent to remind him not to go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention.

God whispers to our souls and speaks to our hearts. Sometimes when we don't listen, He has to throw a brick at us. It's our choice, each and every day: Listen to the voice, or wait for the brick.

God whispers to our souls and speaks to our hearts. Most of us are moving too fast and making too much noise to hear the gentle voice of God. Our windows are rolled up, our music is cranked up, our engines are roaring, and we have little chance of hearing the whisper. We don't pay attention until we get hit by a brick. And then, when we do try to get involved with others, it can still fall short because our connection with the needy, the hungry, the homeless is superficial at best. Put your can of beans on the shelf downstairs and walk away.

One writer put it this way, *"We touch the lepers at arm's length, without ever leaving the security of our own turf. Loving our neighbors means something more. It means being vulnerable. It means entering into their pain. When God in Jesus came to live among us, He shared our troubles and felt our hurts. Do we feel the pain of those in need?"*

We will hear the whisper only when we are willing to feel the pain of our neighbors in need. When we become vulnerable enough to share their troubles and feel their hurts, and then take actions that show that we love our neighbors just as much as we love ourselves. Our love is not just a warm and wonderful feeling, but it must be seen and felt in actions. To be saved by grace through faith and to share God's love is to reach out and touch!

In the Letter of St. James we read: *"For if a brother or sister is in need and lacks daily food, and one of us says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,' and yet we do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."* Love the Lord our God with heart, soul, mind and strength and love our neighbor as we love ourself. OR wait for the brick to hit!

So what are we going to do to make our faith visible? The young executive leaves his brand new car parked on the street as he goes to lift the hurt boy back into his wheelchair. And then he takes his hand and wipes the scrapes and cuts. That is active faith!

Another person spends a day each week reading and singing with patients in an Alzheimer's unit. That is visible faith!

A family devotes a night on a regular basis to working at a local shelter for the homeless. That is faith in action!

An individual serves as a caring presence in the life of someone who is feeling alienated from friends and from God. That is faith that can be seen!

Still another person meets fellow church goers over a cup of coffee on Sunday morning, just to find out what life is like the other six days of the week. And that is faith in action!

The key is to listen for the voice, and then act. To get up, get moving, get lifting, get carrying, get climbing, get digging, get serving, get going and do whatever we hear the voice of God calling us to do. Sure, there may be some barriers that separate us from the people around us. But we need to leave those barriers parked on the side of the road as we head to the sidewalk and walk in the steps of our Lord.

When we hear the needs of the world and place those needs in the hands of our Lord, amazing things can happen. The sick are healed! The hungry are fed! The oppressed are set free! The poor are helped! The homeless are sheltered! Peace can break out! Justice can be done! Hope can replace hopelessness! And Help can come to the helpless! The Lord's work with our hands!

And it all starts with open ears! It all starts with hearing the voice of God!

The Prophet Isaiah pleaded with the people to listen before it was too late!

Twice Jesus says, "I tell you!" and then Jesus tells a story: Bear fruit, QUICK! Before the next brick comes flying!"

And we pray: HELP ME TO HEAR!

And all God's children say,

Amen.

**Sola Deo Gloria!**