

## **Homily For Friday of the Third Week of Lent - Year II**

### **St Peter's 8:30am Mass - Friday, March 8, 2024**

**Hosea 14:1-9** "The ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them."

**Psalms 81:5-16** "O that my people would listen to me."

**Mark 12:28-34** "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord with all your heart."

### **Listen, Hear, Obey**

#### **Introduction**

It is true that faith among the people is going backwards in many places and among many people. However, one group is increasing in a certain kind of faith. More than half of scientists today believe in an intelligent creating God. This is more than perhaps for the last two hundred years. Many of these believing scientists still struggle with, or even oppose, the idea that this creating intellect is a personal God, one who seeks a personal relationship with his people. Both the prophet Hosea and the Psalmist, in today's readings, begin with that very reality. In Amos: "Thus says the Lord." The psalm passage begins: "I hear a voice I had not known." The message of the Scriptures tell us that God speaks to us. It may not always be obvious. However, if we are listening, and not just listening but really hearing, we will find that our hearts are being asked to obey that voice. To listen, to hear, to obey.

It takes all three of these things to be a person of faith. There is something called practical atheism, which is to live as if there was no God. When we look at Sacred Scripture, written by many different authors, we see their testimony that God not only exists, but that God speaks, and that this speech is personal. It is directed at people for their benefit. And it calls us to respond. It demands something of us.

#### **Hosea**

This practical atheism is a defect that God is addressing through the prophet Hosea. Israel has begun to trust in alliances with other nations. They have also begun to trust in "the work of their own hands." Is that something that can

happen to us, that we trust in our careers or our hobbies or whatever we consider the work of our own hands? I sure feel that for myself.

It is a little hard to follow in the text, but God says to Hosea to say to Israel to say this in their prayer. God gives them the words to pray. It doesn't get any more simple than that. People sometimes say: I don't know what to say to God. Well, Israel is given those words. Say this: "Assyria shall not save us. Our horses shall not save us. We will no longer look to the work of our hands as idols, as if they could save us." And we might include in our prayer: Our technology shall not save us. We are invited to ask God to heal us of the defect of receiving our fulfillment from the works of our own hands and from our practical atheism.

### **Psalm**

The psalmist mirrors Hosea almost exactly. There is a voice that the psalmist says has become unfamiliar. Why is that? Well they have stopped listening to God's voice. Is that applicable for us during this Lent? It sure could be. In Lent we repeat frequently the refrain: "If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts." Because the kind of listening God wants begins in the heart, that is our task, the whole year through but especially during Lent, to listen with our hearts. If we are attentive to God, then we value him above all other things. We will listen, we will truly hear, and our hearts will be obedient to that divine voice.

### **Mark**

The Good News of Jesus Christ today is prompted by the question from a scribe. This scribe asks the question that we hear asked in other places in the Gospels. What is the most important commandment? What law carries with it the greatest authority? If I obeyed only one commandment, what would it be? Jesus' answer should be pretty familiar to us: Love God with your whole heart, and love your neighbour. That part of the passage we get. We hear it and I think we try to live it. That's why we are at mass on a Friday during Lent. But we should not pass by the scribe's response. He listened to Jesus answer his question. But he did not just listen, he really heard the words of Jesus. They sank in to his heart. How do we know this? Well, he repeats the answer with the little, but very important,

addition: "This commandment is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." We don't make animal sacrifices, but we can add in here that this commandment is much more than our technology and whatever else we depend on. So, to love God means to place that love above anything and everything I might otherwise consider important, that have become my idols.

Did the scribe get it right? Jesus says so, with the affirmation that you and I must desire to hear more than anything: "You are not far from the kingdom of God." Wow! Now we know what is the purpose of our whole lives, to hear Jesus say that to us.

### **Call To Conversion**

If we are attentive to God, then we value him above other things. The most important prayer for Israel, which is still so today, can be our daily prayer: Hear, O Israel, the Lord is one. You must love the Lord with all your heart. You must remind yourself of this command many times every day. God must be in first place. If this is not so, then nothing is in the right place. But if we listen to God's voice, and if we hear that voice, then the greatest joy of our hearts will be to obey our saviour, who spoke to us through his willingness to give everything for us.