

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> February; Sunday next before Lent; Benefice Holy Communion Ampleforth

Preparing this sermon, I realised the words “listen” and “silent” are spelt with the same letters. It is a profound truth that to listen properly you must be silent first.

In Scripture, today we can see a direct correlation between listening, being silent and obeying. They go completely hand in hand. You are not listening, if you are not silent and not listening well if you are not obeying. Listening isn't just a passive activity. It encompasses so much more. It is hearing God's truth, understanding God's truth, being changed by God's truth, and living out God's truth.

To listen correctly means that we must live a life of obedience to what He has commanded us and be aware of how much He loves us. In fact, the word obedience derives from the word ‘to listen intently’; to the voice of God, to hear his voice and to follow it - so that we are lead along a path of God's rather than our own.

So, to obey really means to hear and then act upon what we have heard, or, in other words, to see that the listening achieves its aim. We are not being truly attentive unless we are prepared to act on what we hear.

God speaks through the Holy Spirit. The question is, are we listening? Do we desire to hear His voice over our own voice? Most of us are moving 100 miles per hour throughout the day, but are we willing to stop and be silent and to listen to Him? God speaks in multiple ways. He speaks in prayer, teaching, and sacrament, through others and through experience.

In the Gospel today we heard again the amazing and mysterious account of what is known to us as the Transfiguration. Here the disciples are stunned into

silence and fear by the dramatic change in the appearance of Jesus, which concludes with the Father saying to the disciples, 'Listen to Him'.

In the passage, after the disciples are told to listen Jesus tells them, "Do not be afraid,". Both instructions are but one does not cancel the other out. In fact, the cloud of God's presence may be gone, but Jesus, is still present and in their midst and so we learn then that comfort and compassion can be just as overwhelming as terror or fright, and just as awe-inducing.

In other words, by listening to Jesus, by knowing his kindness, they are disposed to obedience and understanding. For tied to Jesus's command, "do not be afraid," is the command to "Get up." to get up and get on with living forgiven of sin? So, by saying 'get up' Jesus says to us, listen and obey, know God's comforting presence and do not be afraid, let these things propel you in taking up your cross, denying yourself and giving your whole self over to God.

The message then of the Gospel today, the account of the Transfiguration is this; when all else fades, Jesus remains, in the silence reaching out to comfort and heal, speaking words we will hear if we listen in the silence, and obey, 'Get up, don't be afraid'.

Thanks be to God, Amen.