

St Peter's, Ealing
Sunday 10th February 2019
4th Sunday before Lent (Family Mass)

Are you listening?

There is a game I played at parties when I was a child. I am guessing you still play it today. We call it Chinese Whispers. In other countries it has other names. I know in America for example it is called the Telephone Game. The game begins with the first person thinking up a phrase. Then they whisper it into the ear of the person next to them. That person then whispers the phrase into the ear of the next person and so on until the phrase is handed on to the person at the end of the line. The final recipient then shares what they heard as the phrase. It gets funnier and funnier as the phrase changes with each whisper. It is a sort of listening game and shows how, without very careful listening, we can miss the message.

I bet in your class the teachers are often speaking about good listening or encouraging you to stop chatting and listen. It is in listening that we begin to learn properly.

In today's gospel story Jesus is keen that the crowd that has come to hear him can listen well. He realised that stood on the beach he could not be heard so well so he gets himself into the boat and encourages the crowd to sit on the beach and listen. Sitting in the boat he will be heard more clearly, especially if they listen. Later in the story, Jesus encourages the fishermen to cast their nets. They have been fishing all night with no success, but they have listened to Jesus and they trust him so they do as he asks and the catch is so huge they nearly get into lots of trouble and need help bringing the nets in.

If we are to be faithful people, it is important that we listen too. Yet often we are too busy making noise and charging around getting on with life today. We forget how important it is to stop and listen to God. We need to listen to God so that we can clearly hear God's word for us.

How do we hear God?

1. we stop – we make space in our day to be quiet and in God's presence
2. Reading scripture carefully and quietly will allow us to hear what God is trying to tell us through the story of Jesus (like we heard today)
3. Listening – to others and the world around us. often God will speak to us through other people, through Stepping Stones leaders, Pebbles leaders, lent group leaders for example or through our experience in the world

It is important that we don't let our relationship with God be based on bad listening. If we do then our faith and our understanding of God's word for us might just end up as garbled as a Chinese whisper.