

Sermon

Three words from our Old Testament reading:

Come Listen Live

“**Come,**” says the Lord to everyone who is thirsty; to those who are weary, to those who are parched, to those who are dry – the invitation is to come.

Come because our God is the One who welcomes people. Doesn't Jesus also say, “*Come to me all who are weary and bowed down with life's problems.*”? [Matthew 11.28]

Our God invites people – and the door is open.

Jesus echoes this in our gospel reading. Even though the leaders of Jerusalem have, in times past, killed prophets and despised those who proclaim God's word, yet still God longs to gather the people together and protect them and give them safety and life.

The invitation is for us today. Come. Come because God loves us and cares about us. Come because we are not marginalised or cast aside, come because God specialises in reviving those who are defeated by life's problems.

Listen. Why do we come? Well, the invitation is to listen to God's word to us. Sometimes coming can be hard – because often it means surrender: admitting that I cannot go on alone; I can no longer do it “my way”. But “listening” demands that we are attentive. We want to say. “Lord, I've

come, it's been a struggle but I'm here.” We want to speak, because in talking we keep control, but we cannot.

To come to God, to bask in God's love, means that we lose control. We come to absolute love, divine grace, wholehearted forgiveness and there to listen to all that God says. “*Give ear to me*” says the text.

Jesus speaks of people who would not listen to the word of the Lord – they killed the prophets and silenced God's word. These were people who thought they had come, but they did not stay to listen.

What do we hear when we listen? It might be nothing! It might just be the silence of the presence of God. Have you ever heard that silence? The silence that speaks volumes! We read of Elijah who thought that God would speak in the earthquake, then the wind and then the fire; but no. It was in the whisper of silence that God spoke. [1 Kings 19.11-13]

God spoke to Elijah a word of rebuke and yet of love. When we come to God we can expect to be reminded of our need for healing and forgiveness – but always, always in love. We can expect to hear a word of empowerment. Isaiah had been in the presence of God and heard God speak. The message to Isaiah was ‘Go – in my name, and in my strength.’”

Often we are weak or uncertain because we do not wait. We come with our own opinions and our own talking, but God says, “Listen”.

The third word is **“Live”**. Listen to the text again, *“Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.”* Life is what God offers his people. This is eternal life – God’s life – the life of heaven on earth. It is the life of peace with God and being content with him.

People all around us choose death rather than life. It’s seen dramatically day-by-day in our ministry. We see it in people who choose to take drugs – their life is being sapped from them. We see it in people who become addicted to their work and meaning and love drops out of their lives. We see it in ourselves – and probably each of us knows those things that are not good for us. But Jesus offers us life.

Jesus really reflected the goodness of God when he said, “I have come in order that you might have life – life to the fullest extent possible.” [John 10.10]

Life is all that makes us thrive, inwardly. Life brings us joy, hope, peace, compassion, nobility of character, courage, patience and endurance. Choose life and receive it as a gift.

But how then do we “Come, listen and live.”?

It is very simple! Open your hearts to God’s love. Don’t try to hide away. Remember that you are loved by God and you are valuable to him. As this service continues be attentive to hear God’s words of assurance and grace to you. As you

receive the bread and wine imagine that you are indeed receiving Christ into your life – and that you are indeed being given life – in all its fullness and variety.

And now let us hear again the words of the prayer for today, and then let us sit in silence just for a minute or so to allow the invitation “Come, Listen, Live” to sink into our hearts.

O God the fountain of life,
to a humanity parched with thirst
you offer the living water that springs from the Rock
our Saviour Jesus Christ:
stir up within your people the gift of your Spirit,
that we may profess our faith with freshness
and announce with joy the wonder of your love.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.