

*Being listened to is so  
close to being loved that most  
people cannot tell the difference.*



(image: printMeMe)

We take a breath and come intentionally into God's presence

The Lord be with you: **And also with you.**

Holy Spirit draw us close and minister your grace to us. May we recognise your presence in our midst. **Amen**

Where there is praise you dwell.

Where your faithful gather – virtually, singularly, or together indoors or out, you are here, in our midst.

With gladness and joy, we praise you, Holy One.

With dancing hearts, we praise you, Creator God.

With thanks for all your gifts and graces, we praise you, Sacred Presence.

With all we are and all we have, we praise you, Author of Life. **Amen.** *By Kathy Swaar*

### **Bible Reading Matthew 18:15-20**

Jesus said, "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

## A Puzzle

An electric train runs at a speed of 50km/hr in a southerly direction.

The wind is blowing at 10km/hr in a northly direction.

Another train runs parallel to the train at 60km/hr in a northly direction. will he see the  
Which direction will the smoke blow?

*Answer at the bottom of the page 😊*

## Reflection

I think we might all relate to the frustration of not being properly heard or understood, no matter how many words we use. The art of deep listening is a gift and a grace. It takes focus and intent to properly hear, acknowledge and embody what has been expressed to us, and all this before we even begin to frame our view or reply. Listening without any intent is hard!

How many of you replay uncomfortable conversations over and over? The process is rarely satisfying. And in these replays how often is the focus on the words the other said and how much is on your words, particularly those you might wish you had said, or not said at all?

In the gospel passage the word 'listen' is mentioned four times. Jesus obviously knew it is a skill we have to work on! If we have a dispute with another we are to listen (the emphasis isn't on talk) to each other and see if we can reach a better understanding, to try and see (hear) the situation from the others point of view, even if we really do think we are right! If we still can't reach an agreement we are to invite an elder, an outside counsellor (I personally would find a group of 2/3 people quite scary and not overly neutral!) to help in the communication and learning.

Now here it gets more tricky because if we can't hear what is being said we are to be exiled like a tax collector, which seems pretty harsh- especially if you are a tax collector! But, who does Jesus choose to sup with? The tax collector, the excluded. No one is an outcast to God.

We may be exiled from a Church (I have been before twice- once as a child from an Anglican Church for being the wrong skin colour and once as an adult from a Free Church for spending time in an Anglican Church! Others have been rejected for their sexuality, gender identity or for 'just not being the right fit'. Sadly our churches are not always the place of radical welcome Jesus modelled).

We may be exiled from a friendship network or from a family group - and the breaking of these bonds can be traumatic and painful. To be estranged or to be made estranged from family is more common than we might expect and often distressing. But in these moments, these places of pain and exile Jesus meets us and invites us to sit with him. In his presence there is no need for words, yet if we choose to share our heart he listens, listens, listens and holds us and gives us the water of life beyond the intricacies and vulnerabilities of human life and relationships. If we come full of sin, shame and bitter regret he listens, listens, listens and says 'I have paid it all, you are clean, you are welcomed, you are loved'.

May we all know Gods love and acceptance especially in times of exile. **Amen.**

*(NB If you are in one of these situations you may like to talk to me in confidence or to a trusted friend or counsellor, but know that you are not alone and it doesn't just happen to you).*

## **Worship**

All heaven declares – Lucy Gibson (attached)

Love divine all loves excelling – THENBA:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGGcqhKShQ8&ab\\_channel=THENBA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGGcqhKShQ8&ab_channel=THENBA)

Here is love, vast as the ocean - Robin Mark

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8YOPj5TnUM&ab\\_channel=citrail](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8YOPj5TnUM&ab_channel=citrail)

Jesus paid it all (with lyrics) by Kim Walker-Smith

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWPC4clWlbQ&ab\\_channel=JW](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWPC4clWlbQ&ab_channel=JW)

## **Prayers of Intercession**

Almighty God,

We thank-you for your indescribable love for us.

For all the blessings in our lives seen and unseen.

For a world of beauty and diversity.

We pray for the life of the Church and its leaders that they will seek you in all things.

For our churches, parishes and communities;

For our schools, colleges and work places.

We pray for the needs of the world, for peace, justice, and good governance.

For the responsible using and sharing of resources;

For the rebuilding of devastated communities – for Louisiana, Beirut and Syria.

We pray for those seeking work, those living with poverty and limited resources.

For the homeless, displaced and trafficked;

For the fearful, lonely and those missing close physical connections.

We pray for families and friendships that feel broken.

For healing and reconciliation where it is safe to do so;

For peace and positive relationships.

We pray for all who are unwell...

For those living with pain or waiting for operations.

For all who struggle in body, mind or spirit, and those who care for them.

Surround them with your healing love and grace and the knowledge that they are deeply precious to you.

We commend to your safe keeping those who have recently died..

and ask your comfort for those who grieve.

We give thanks for those whom we have loved and thank-you for the reassurance in you of eternal life.

*In this moment of stillness we lift before you the prayers we carry in our own hearts*

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Holy Trinity of God bless the prayers of our hearts and those for whom we pray. **Amen.**

*Joining all our prayers together we say the prayer our saviour taught us:*

**Our Father, who art in heaven;  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

### **Blessing**

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be with you and those you love always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

*Puzzle Answer: "An electric engine doesn't generate smoke." 😊*