

# 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

Fr. Samuel Springuel

5 October, 2025

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading** Habakkuk 1:2-3;2:2-4

**Responsorial Psalm** Psalm 95:1-2,6-7,8-9

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading** 2 Timothy 1:6-8,13-14

**Gospel** Luke 17:5-10

“O that today you would listen to his voice!” Fr Gabriel has done a wonderful job of selecting a setting for today’s psalm which is consistent in how it renders this line in both the response and the third verse. This line, however, is notoriously hard to translate and I’ve seen it translated in several different ways:

- “Today, if you will hear His voice”
- “If only you would listen to his voice right now!”
- “If only today you would listen to his voice:”
- “Listen to God’s voice today!”
- “Listen to his voice today:”
- “Listen today to what he says:”
- “Oh, that today you would hear his voice:”
- “Today, if He speaks, hear His voice.”

The differences are subtle in some cases, as little as a single word is changed, but when we take them all together, looking for the underlying meaning that grounds these various ways of saying the same thing, we can discern a longing for the voice of God. The psalmist, the singers, we ourselves, are not just talking about something that might happen, we are expressing the desire, begging practically, to hear God speaking to us, and not just at some point in the future, but today, right now even. We don’t want to wait because we know that whatever happens, God has the initiative. It is His voice, His Word, that sets things in motion; sets our salvation in motion and what could be more important than that? We want that to happen now!

But His voice doesn’t speak into the void. It enters our ears. As the translations which use the word “listen” emphasize, this is not merely a passive process: something that happens around us but doesn’t really involve us. When God speaks we are to listen, to take in what he says and allow it to fill our

thoughts. Indeed, this is so urgent that some of the translations turn it into a command: “Listen!”

And do what? The psalmist continues “harden not your hearts.” “Do not be stubborn and rebel.” I said earlier that the use of the verb “listen” implies that we need to take in what God says, his Word, and let it fill our thoughts, but here the psalmist goes further. To the Jewish mindset the heart was the seat of the self, the place from which one’s entire personality emerged: will, emotions, memories, and reason. To harden the heart was to become rigid, define oneself in opposition to what would influence you, most especially God. Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to let the Israelites go, even in the face of God’s wonderworking power. We are to do the opposite, to not harden our hearts, to soften them, so that God’s word can enter in and transform us.

How do we do this? The question is, in a sense, its own answer: we listen to God’s Word. “God’s Word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. Able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.” God has spoken his Word, He has taken the initiative, He can remove our stony hearts and give us natural hearts. The Spirit of God is given to us granting us courage, power, love, and self-control, the tools by which we can soften our hearts.

So the question really shouldn’t be “how,” but rather do we? Do we listen to God’s Word, do we use the gifts of the Spirit that have been poured into our hearts? It’s important to remember that God doesn’t give us gifts so that we can put them on a shelf where all can admire them. God’s gifts are not tchotchkes or bric-à-brac. They should not collect dust! God’s gifts are tools, tools of good works. Tools that are made, given to be used, not treated as art to be put on display. A tool which no one uses isn’t really a tool anymore. It’s a hunk of metal, fit only for the furnace so that it can become something useful again.

As with normal tools, the ones God gives us are not safe. We can smash our fingers, cut ourselves when we use them, especially if they are unfamiliar or we aren’t paying attention. God’s tools must be treated with respect; we must practice with them. Sometimes our own limitations and inexperience will lead to us creating things with them that are just plain ugly, but that doesn’t mean we stop using them. We learn from the experience and try again. God gave us this tool for a reason, one we don’t always see in the moment, but if we are really listening to God, letting him into our hearts, we will trust God that the tools he has given us are the ones we will need and will work to master them rather than begging him for some other, supposedly better tool.

This is what it means to be unworthy servants. We are not in charge; God is. We might not know what God is doing, we might not like the way he’s doing it, but it is not our place to question the Master’s methods. We are to listen, to let God into our hearts, and then do what he has asked of us in that moment. We might not see how our actions fit into the greater scheme. We might not see our actions as being successful. But these are not the measures we should be using. As Mother Teresa would say, God is asking us to be faithful, not successful. God has a vision, one that will come true in His time using His methods. He has spoken his Word to us, given us our role in his vision. He has given us the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that we are capable of participating in his vision, fulfilling our role. It remains only for us to have faith the size of a mustard seed. “O that today you would listen to His voice, harden not your hearts.”