



Day 1 | Thursday, March 7, 2024
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You are the Beloved of God. That can be a difficult thing to believe. It becomes difficult because there are so many voices telling us other things. The things we are being told may not be blatantly bad but they are deceptive or contrary to the ultimate truth.

I believe one of the biggest deceptions we have today is about love. This may be because our society has defined love as romantic love, a love that we want to believe can heal what wounds us, make us happy and more attractive, and give you value in life.

We've romanticized human love, probably because it can be commercialized, but human love is so imperfect, it shows-off, it gets its feelings hurt, can be jealous, and conditional.

I once read that because we were once loved poorly, incompletely, and conditionally, we begin to believe that on some level, that maybe we are undeserving of being loved well.

Richard Rohr has said we either transmit our pain or we transform it. We either transmit that notion of not being loved well onto others or you transform it. It is transformed by accepting the unconditional love of God.

Our scripture lessons today tell us to be careful how you listen. The prophet Jeremiah told us God was saying to listen to His voice for he will be our God and we God's people.

Now we say "the voice of God", that doesn't mean an audible voice, all that means is that God communicates with us, and that communication can happen in many ways. If something comes toward us with grace and can pass through us and toward others with grace, we can trust it as the voice of God.

God is love, and we were created from that love so that we may love. A few years ago I did the 30 day Spiritual Exercises again. In one of my prayer contemplations on divine love I had this mental image of a beach at the ocean. Instead of sand castles there was a person made out of the sand from the beach. Eventually it was trampled and the mounds of sand were flattened and was just part of the beach again.

I saw that as a metaphor. The beach was God and the sand was the "stuff of God" or love, the essence of God. The sand-person was made out of the things of God, love. It was made of God but wasn't God, it was separate, and eventually it returned to the beach, to God.

I see that as our truth. We are from God, loved into existence. St. Paul tells us what real love looks like in 1 Corinthians. Love is patient, love is kind, It bears all things, and endures all things. That reading is read at many weddings. Paul reminds us that divine love is different from romantic love. He is teaching us how to love one another like God loves.

To be beloved is not like a Hallmark Romance movie or greeting card. You're not going to find a greeting card that says "I love you so much I will endure you"!

Paul is not writing about sentimental love but love as our origin. We don't make ourselves worthy of it, because this type of love is about the giver not the receiver. You don't have to earn it.

In the face to face gaze of the beloved, you aren't loved because you are known. You are known by God because you are loved by God. Think about that. It's the truth of who you were before any pain and hurt was transmitted to you by those who are also hurt and are in pain.

The voice of God is not shaming, accusing, nor blaming. That is the voice of the accuser, who the bible calls Satan. St. Ignatius called it the enemy of our human nature. But sadly that is often the voice we use to

ourselves and to one another.

It is also the voice that hardens our hearts. When our hearts become hardened then we become deaf to the true voice, unable to hear. We begin to lose sight of the fact that we are Beloved of God. As the voices of the enemy of our human nature, a nature that we are told in the creation story of Genesis was very good, drowns out the truth of who we are, a false narrative begins to take over.

This false narrative can become the inner demons that we wrestle with. The bible stories tend to personify demons, but demons really are the things that have power or control of us that do not lead to being free.

When Jesus casts out demons he restores the person to the community. Today's gospel passage begins with Jesus driving out a demon that took a person's voice. The accuser separates us and makes us lonely.

The enemy of our human nature wants us to forget that we are the Beloved of God. It's easier to forget when you are left out, have no voice, then you begin to listen to other voices and become deaf to the voice of God.

We must learn to listen to the voice of God, the one who names us as Beloved. What voice are you listening to? Are you listening to the voice of those who are transmitting their pain or the voice of the Lover to the Beloved?

We must listen to that inner divine image, to our true self. We must learn to hear and to obey. It is in obeying that divine voice that calls us Beloved that we gather with Christ and not scatter.

Listen today to our Lord's voice, and "do not harden your heart".

Let us ask for this grace: the grace to listen so that our hearts may not harden and we claim our identity as the Beloved people of God.