

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Mar 7th 2013

"Thus says the Lord: This is what I commanded my people: Listen to my voice; Then I will be your God and you shall be my people."

Lent is a privileged time for listening to the voice of God. Jesus is our model. After his baptism by John the Baptist at the River Jordan, Jesus withdrew to pray. During his prayer Luke tells us that the skies opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove and a voice from heaven was heard, "You are my beloved son; on you my favor rests."

Jesus, stunned, withdrew led by the Spirit into the desert to figure out what this all meant. For forty days he listened to his Father's voice. His father spoke to him; his life was forever altered.

Jesus then returned from the desert in the power of the Spirit and went to Nazareth in Galilee. In the synagogue on the sabbath he announced his new mission using the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The spirit of the lord is upon me; therefore he has anointed me."

Jesus had been anointed by the Father to begin a new ministry -- proclaiming the Kingdom of God!

This was unacceptable to the townsfolk. They were indignant and wanted to throw him over the brow of the hill. For thirty years Jesus had lived unobtrusively in Nazareth with his mother and pursuing the family trade. He did not stand out among his town folk as anyone special. He was just the son of Joseph the carpenter.

But he had heard his Father's voice and nothing could stop him from embracing his new mission.

Lent is a privileged time for listening to the voice of God in prayer. Like Jesus we must find our own "desert place" where we can listen to God without distraction -- without the noise of cell phones and iPads. In Lent we set aside extra times to go to our "desert place" -- whether it be in church or in nature or in the quiet of our homes — to listen for God's voice in the silence and solitude of prayer.

How is God calling us this year to turn away from selfishness and sin? How is God calling us to serve the Kingdom in new ways?

"If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

Dick Hauser, S.J.