

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Feb 13th 2015

There are history books which invite the reader to ask at which historical event they would wish to have been present and why. In today's Liturgical Readings, there are two scenes at which I wish I would have been present. So join me as I enter today's exciting stories.

I am not naked, but Adam and Eve are shamelessly enjoying each other and our surroundings. They laugh at my fine clerical suit and shiny black shoes and ask me if I am not a bit warm and tied down with all that cloth. I am tempted to take off only my jacket when this rather small snakey thing begins distracting Eve first and then Adam. They had listened to God's advice about how to live in the Garden and did live what they had heard. The words of the snake were easier to listen to, because the words attracted them to a freedom of choice which God's words didn't possess.

I tried to warn them and the snake looked at me and said softly, "I'll deal with you much later, Buster." So the three drifted away from my sight and they plugged their ears from my shouting about the nature of temptation and the possibilities of violence and ingratitude which I seemed to know a lot about. So I walked around looking at the trees and even ate some new kind of fruit and after a while. I saw the two, who seemed so close to each other before, now walking separately and they were dressed, top to bottom in furry-looking suits. They were walking toward the edge of the garden and not looking backward at me, but downcast-like bumping into trees and stumbling over stones and not helping each other up after falling. I put on my jacket again, because it was getting cooler and darker and I too was bumping and stumbling. I wish I had spoken up more directly and grabbed them away from that tale-telling, tail-wagging snake!

Now I am walking with Jesus and this crowd brings a fellow who has a sign reading that he cannot hear nor speak. He is thrown toward Jesus to test whether Jesus could heal him. I have great confidence in Jesus and he does his things, spits a little and plugs the man's ears and looks up and about and then steps back. Yup, the man begins speaking and can hear the cheers and the statements of amazement. The man looks at me and I tell him that Jesus has been doing these life-giving deeds all over. I say that these people who have brought you here, they have heard and just wanted to see for themselves.

This man and his friends go off striding, alert, not stumbling or bumping into things. They have heard and believed. Jesus calls to them to not tell anyone about what he had done for the man, but I think they either didn't hear this or their excitement was just too much to keep to themselves.

There are ways of hearing which do not involve ears. God seems to have a history of non-wording communication. There is more to any relationship than ideas and knowing. Eve and Adam wanted knowledge and the power and control which come from those. Jesus did not tell the man just how to do this or that to live the faithful life. He gave the man an openness to hear with more than his ears.

In this culture of ours we are growing harder and harder of hearing to what is really good for us. We ask for the touch of Jesus to free us to listen to our hearts, our better selves, and the heart-needs of others and thereby tell in our lives what those who saw this miracle were telling others. Jesus calls to them to not tell anyone about what he had done for the man, but I think they either didn't hear this or their excitement was just too much to keep to themselves.

Larry Gillick, S.J.-Creighton University's Deglman Center for Ignatian Spirituality