

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Feb 21st 2024

Are we looking for miracles?

We hear, but we don't listen. Our eyes are open, but we don't see.

In the Gospel today, Jesus talks about Jonah and the Ninevites. Jonah went to Nineveh and preached a message of repentance. Everyone listened, from the lowliest to the king. They put on sackcloth and fasted and prayed for God's compassion. They heard the message. They listened, and they were saved.

Of all the prophets, Jonah was the only one who preached to Gentiles. Despite his own reluctance to preach at all, his message carried an obvious truth that shed light on the behaviour of the Ninevites and led them to repentance. He did not need to give any further signs. The same could be said of the openness of the queen of the South to the wisdom of Solomon. For both, there was an openness to truth and a readiness to relate and take it to heart.

Jesus says he is bringing that message to our generation. But do we listen to this message? Do we see its impact? We have the message of love, understanding, and compassion that we could ever ask for, but we fail to listen or don't want to hear! We cover our ears and mumble so the words don't come through, or we let the noise of our lives drown out the promptings of our hearts, the voice of the Holy Spirit.

That is my biggest hurdle: I know what I should do, but I fail to do it. We get preoccupied with our work, leisure activities and social media engagements so that we have no more time for prayer, energy for works of charity and no more interest in matters of faith. That is when attending church and receiving sacraments are seen as obligations, fasting, almsgiving and prayer are regarded as requirements during Lent alone.

The Word of God calls on us to be attentive to our surroundings and tune in to the message of God's love. Instead of the sackcloth of the Ninevites', we can wear a veil of compassion. We can fast from the distractions that prevent us from listening and seeing what's important around us. We should train our eyes to see the pain of those around us, and prepare our hearts to offer them a shoulder to lean on or an attentive ear to listen.

Bible Claret