

Monday

Read Mark 10:46–52

Jesus listens even when it doesn't make sense to anyone else. In this passage, a blind man is calling out to Jesus. People tell him to be quiet, he is interrupting and being a nuisance. He keeps calling out to Jesus. Jesus invites him over. And then Jesus says something subtly remarkable. He says, "What do you want me to do for you?" The obvious thought in the crowd and for us is, "Uh, Jesus, you've healed a zillion people, I bet this blind guy doesn't want to be blind. Why don't you just heal him and get on with it?" Jesus almost certainly knows what the man wants, too, but he still takes time to ask and to listen. Jesus pays attention to him when no one else will. He could have healed him from where he was in the crowd. Jesus chooses to stop what he is doing, pay attention to the man, and listen to him. The recovery of his sight allows this previously blind man to see others, but Jesus makes sure that this man is seen and personally cared for and that is powerful.

Put yourself in this passage today. Do you feel like the blind man crying out to be heard? Do you sense that you'd probably be one of the people telling him to be quiet so they could hear what Jesus is saying? Do you feel that you could make it a point to stop and pay special attention to someone who needs to be heard today – especially when they are being annoying? All of us have times when we feel we desperately need to be heard. All of us have times when we've told people to pipe down so we could hear what we think is more important. Not all of us take time to listen to those in need. How will you ask Jesus to put in on your heart to be a person who makes it a point to listen this week?

Tuesday

Read John 4:4–30

The mere action of Jesus being at the well (getting water was a woman's job in that day... and still is for many women in the world today) and speaking to a Samaritan woman crossed the cultural boundaries of ethnicity, religion, and gender, at a minimum. He puts himself in a place where he can hear and go deeper with someone who needs to be heard and understood.

Jesus engages the woman in conversation and listens to her. He doesn't just listen so he can go into one of his tried-and-true lectures, he listens to what is on her heart. He hears

the weight of hundreds of years of hostility between the peoples, the alienation from being included in the people of God, and her own life struggles. He listens to understand. He listens to know her world.

What needs to change in your heart and how you interact with others so that you can purposefully listen to understand them and know their world? Spend some time in prayer inviting Jesus into this space.

Wednesday

Read John 4:1-42

I think it is easy and common (I'm sure I've done it) to read this passage and conclude that the woman will say one thing and Jesus contradicts/dismisses what she says by going deeper and implying that she doesn't understand what is really going on. I don't think that is the best we can do to understand what is going on in this conversation. Hatred between Jewish people and Samaritans goes back 700 years from Jesus' time and the roots of the enmity can be found in 2 Kings 17. Encounters between Samaritans and Jews and men and women did not happen in this manner in this era.

To dig deeper look at this passage again. When you read a question or statement by the woman, stop and think about what the deeper meaning of her question/statement is before you read Jesus' response. Then, read his response. How do you understand what Jesus says differently than you did at first reading?

Thursday

Read Psalm 145

In a year which has had so much loss, it is easy to have our minds, hearts, and spirits focused on what we have lost and what and who is not with us today. The Lord is still with us – this day and every day. Give thanks to the Lord for everything he has gifted you today... and everything you have is a gift from God. Praise God with thanksgiving!

Friday

In preparation for Sunday worship, please read and reflect upon Psalm 24:7-10 and John 14:1-11 as we head into the first Sunday of Advent.