

Lent 1C, 2010

Text: Luke 4:1-13

Title: Two Voices

+ INI +

There have always been two voices. Just two.

God speaks first. His voice creates. His voice brings light. His voice speaks love and life and peace. His voice brings all things together in Him. His voice creates faith and trust. God's voice is truth.

The Devil speaks second. He has nothing new to say. All he can do is contradict what God has already said. His voice destroys, tears down and corrupts. His voice speaks fear and doubt. His voice is lie.

In the beginning, God spoke first. His voice created a perfect, holy world. His voice created a peaceful, vibrant world- paradise. His voice said to man and woman- you are made in my image. I love you. Care for my creation. Trust me. If you listen to my voice you will live forever.

The Devil spoke second. His voice introduced fear and doubt. His voice said to woman, "God doesn't really love you. God only wants to control you. God doesn't want you to be like Him. You know better. Don't listen to God. Do things your way,"

Adam and Eve listened to voice number 2. And the result was fighting and arguing; the result was pain and separation. Paradise became a patch of weeds. And they all died.

Fast forward.

At Sinai God spoke first. He promised to take care of His people in the wilderness and bring them safely to the Promised Land. He gave them ten words to live by that would lead to peace and happiness.

The Devil spoke second. He told the people lies, "God doesn't love you. God will not take care of you. You will starve to death. You will die at the hands of your enemies. You were better off as slaves in Egypt."

The Israelites listened to voice number two. They grumbled and complained. They rebelled against Moses and Aaron. They refused to enter the Promised Land because they feared the Canaanites. They did not believe voice number one. They did not trust the Lord to take care of them. They listened to voice number two. And they all died in the wilderness.

Fast forward.

At Jesus' baptism God the Father spoke first. He said to Jesus, "You are my beloved Son, with you I am well-pleased."

The Devil spoke second. Three times he tempted Jesus to doubt that He really was the Son of God. "If you really were God's Son, you wouldn't be starving, so make some food." "If you really were God's Son, you wouldn't need to die on a cross to save the world. Just bow down to me." "If you really were God's Son, you would be more popular. Jump off the temple and everyone will believe in you." Three times the Devil spoke- trying to get Jesus to doubt that He was God's Son, and that God loved Him.

But Jesus listened to voice number one. Jesus remembered the Bible verses He had memorized back in Sunday School. Three times Jesus echoed the truth of voice number one. "Man does not live by bread alone," "You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve," and "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." Jesus knew that He was God's Son and He trusted the voice of His Father.

Adam and Eve and the Israelites had listened to voice number two. They bought the Devil's lies and doubted that God loved them and would take care of them. But Jesus listened to God's voice. Jesus found voice number two empty and hollow.

Fast forward

God still speaks first. His words to you are life and love and peace. God says, you are mine, you are forgiven, I will take care of you. In Holy Baptism God's voice recreates you, makes you a new creation.

Today, God's voice spoke to Nathan. God said, "You belong to me, you are a member of my family, the church, I love you and I will take care of you." God made Nathan His son. God spoke first.

God's voice speaks to all of us- right here. This is the place where God's voice is heard. God's voice speaks to you from lectern, pulpit, font and altar. "This is the Word of the Lord." This is not my word. These are not your words. These are God's words and God's voice. They are truth and life and love and peace.

And you echo God's voice back to Him in prayer and hymns of praise. "Yes, I believe that you created me, you redeemed me, and you make me holy." I trust and believe in you. And that is salvation. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

But soon you will leave this place. And out in the wilderness of this world, voice number two is the loudest. You will hear voice number two contradicting what you hear here, twisting and confusing God's word.

You will hear voice number two on Sunday morning while you are lying in bed, “If God really loved you, He would want you to sleep in. You deserve a day off. You can worship God in your own way. Those church folks just want to take your hard earned money.”

You will hear voice number two when you’re tempted to indulge yourself, and to give in to sinful desires. “Go ahead. God will forgive you. Have a good time and then ask forgiveness later. What’s God going to do, say no?”

You will hear voice number two when you’re in the hospital. “If God really loved you, He wouldn’t let you suffer like this. God must not be real, or maybe He just doesn’t care about you.”

Just like Adam and Eve, just like the Israelites in the wilderness, you will hear voice number two tempt you to doubt God’s voice.

Just like them, there will be times when you will listen to voice number two. You will doubt God’s Word and His love for you. You will put yourself first rather than trusting what God has said to you.

Now the Devil may speak second, but he does not have the last word. God gets the last word. God keeps speaking. God’s voice still speaks to you.

Week after week God’s voice continues to speak. “I love you, I forgive you, you are mine.”

As we heard in the Epistle, God’s word is on your lips and in your heart. Here God fills you full of His words- in your ears, on your forehead, on your lips and down into your heart. He sends pastors and teachers to speak His word. He uses your family member and your friends to speak His words to you.

As long as you live, there will be the two voices.

The first voice will speak of love and life and peace, a word that creates and builds and brings together. This voice will create faith. This voice is truth. This is the voice you hear right here in this place.

The second voice will speak of fear and discord, a voice that tears down and tears apart. This voice creates doubt and leads to death. This voice is lie. It doesn’t speak anything new, it only contradicts the truth.

Listen to the first voice. “I forgive you. I love you. This is my body, this is my blood. Go in peace.”