

Touching the Sounds of Silence

When my ears began to age before my longing to hear began to fade, I became more aware of inner hearing – the aural equivalent of in-sight! So here are three observations on ‘sounds of silence’.

Silence: – as spiritual balm. Silence woven through prayer, silence as we prepare for worship. Silence appreciated for its own sake – in which the voice of God can be better heard. Silence - safeguarded amidst the business and the desire to engage with friends; space to engage with God.

*God is to be heard not in the earthquake, nor in the wind, nor in the fire,
but in the still small voice of calm. (1 Kings 19.12)*

Silence: – as heard by the hard-of-hearing (or even the aurally acute) when the speaker’s voice fails to project beyond the lectern; or when the mic is badly positioned or switched off; or the loop system disengaged. Too many readings, sermons, too many intercessory prayers, go unheard. However, if you find yourself unable to hear what the preacher or reader is saying – try resting in the silence and listen to God.

Silence: – as a way of robbing people of their voice... the response of those who profess to be hearing but who aren’t really listening. Such silence echoes helplessly in the air. The song, ‘Sound of Silence’ (by Simon and Garfunkle) addresses this danger.

*And in the naked light, I saw
Ten thousand people, maybe more:
People talking without speaking,
People hearing without listening,
People writing songs that voices never shared
And no one dared... Disturb the sound of silence!*



To listen attentively is a true measure of service. Often a vital message is hidden between the words – a deep cry for help - sometimes expressed in body language. Someone’s ‘inside story’ is vulnerable to being ignored, rebuffed or criticised. Our task is to heed, respect and sometimes act upon the words we hear... and prayer may be a first response – the prayer which seeks discernment and direction.

So, **ye who have ears to hear...** let’s sharpen up our listening skills: listen more attentively to others; make time to listen to God; and, if we happen to be speaking in church, project our voices so that others can hear!