

**“...and all the eyes in the synagogue looked intently at him.”**

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

**Once upon a time**, specifically, in the time of Jesus, there were two places of worship in Israel: **the temple and the synagogue.**

*There was only one temple; it was located in Jerusalem. But, there were hundreds of synagogues; every village had one. So, this system was like ours: one cathedral & many churches.*

*Now, the Temple was a place of **sacrifice**. There, Jews offered to God lambs & doves, and such.*

*The synagogue was a place of **instruction**. There, Jews listened to God’s Word and tried to apply it to their lives.*

*As you might suspect, the temple-service and the synagogue-service have their counter-parts in our Mass. To clarify:*

*The first part of the Mass is like the synagogue-service. **We** call it the Liturgy of the Word. It deals with the reading of Scripture and applying it to our lives—just as Jesus did for the people of Nazareth in Luke’s Gospel, from which I/the deacon just read to you.*

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the Mass is like the temple-service. **We** call it the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It, too, deals with offering sacrifice—just as Jesus did at the Last Supper. We read where he said:*

**“This is the chalice of my blood...the blood of the new and eternal covenant which will be poured out (that is, SACRIFICED) for you ...and for many, so that sins may be forgiven.”**

*Then, he fulfilled that covenant by shedding his precious blood, the next day, on Golgotha Hill.*

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*For the remainder of this homily I will focus on the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the Mass:*

**The Liturgy of the Word.**

*Our main purpose during the Liturgy of the Word is listening to Scripture, the key word being--*

**LISTENING.**

**Once upon a time**, there was a Broadway play called, **The Royal Hunt of the Sun**. It was about Spain’s 16<sup>th</sup> Century conquest of the Indians in Peru. One scene I must share with you comes at a critical point in the play...when someone offers the Indian chief a Bible and tells him:

**“This is God’s Word. He speaks to us through it.”**

*The chief takes the Bible very cautiously, studies it carefully, then, very slowly, and very gently raises it to his ear. He listens and listens and listens. Then, feeling made the fool of, slams the Bible down angrily.*

*That dramatic scene leads us to ask ourselves,*

**“How do we listen to God’s Word?,” you ask.**

*Well...**I am glad you asked that question!***

*The answer is that we listen to God’s Word in three ways:*

**We listen with the ear of the mind.**

**We listen with the ear of the heart.**

**We listen with the ear of the soul.**

**I<sup>st</sup>**, with the **mind**. We do this, simply, by trying to understand God’s Word. And, we do more. We try to make God’s Word come alive for us.

**For example** with today’s Gospel, St. Ignatius of Loyola would close his eyes and imagine that he was present in the synagogue of Nazareth, listening to Jesus. Moreover, he’d be specific in his imaginings.

What I mean is...he'd imagine the emotion that certainly choked the voice of Jesus when he said:

**"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...because he has anointed me."**

He'd imagine the excitement that certainly electrified the congregation when Jesus said:

**"Today –this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."**

So, listening with the mind means, not only understanding God's Word, but also making it come alive.

**2<sup>nd</sup>**, with the **heart**. We take God's word to heart, trying to see how it applies to our life situation.

**Once upon a time**, a fellow by the name of Charlie Pitts owned the construction company that built the Toronto Subway in Canada. The more Charlie's business grew and the wealthier he became, the more his personal and family life suffered.

One day, things got so bad that Charlie actually turned to the Bible for help. As he read it, one sentence leaped off the page at him. Jesus was speaking:

**"What profit is there for one to gain the whole world, yet lose one's soul in the process?"**

Lk. 9:25

These words spoke right to Charlie. They said to him:

**"Charlie, this is what is happening to you!"**

And so, listening with the heart means taking God's Word to Heart and seeing how it applies to our own life situation.

**3<sup>rd</sup>**, listen with the ear of the **soul**. Here, we talk to God about it ...how we understand his Word and how we perceive it applies to our life. Then we take one more step. We do what Charlie Pitts did. We ask God to help us take the necessary steps to make our life conform to his Word.

**For example**, after Charlie Pitts prayed over his situation, talking to God about it, he discussed it with his wife at length and decided to sell his company, before it destroyed him and his family.

Charlie went on to buy and manage a hotel and golf resort, the income from which, oddly enough, is donated to the spread of the Gospel.

Of course, we can't expect God to answer us in so many words. He speaks to us in a spiritual way ...in the depths of our being, in the depths of our soul.

**For example**, we may experience a growing desire to do something about our situation. We may begin to get ideas on how to deal with it. We may feel a subtle pull toward one of these ideas. Such 'spiritual movements' may well be God speaking to us without words, in the depths of our soul.

By way of conclusion, I will say this. We should listen to God's Word in three ways:

- 1. with the ear of the mind**
- 2. with the ear of the heart**
- 3. with the ear of the soul.**

In other words, we make God's Word come alive in our **mind**.

We take it to **heart**.

And finally, we talk to God about it & listen to what he might want to say to us about it in the **soul** of our being.

It's as simple as **1-2-3** ...You gotta' give it a try!

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you in your efforts...  
...the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.