

Sometimes, we think that being called by God looks like certainty. Like someone standing up and boldly announcing their mission, knowing exactly where they're going and why. But in today's readings, calling looks different. It looks quieter. It begins not with speaking, but with listening.

In Acts, Paul—still known then as Saul—is remembering a turning point in his life. He had been blinded, confused, and unsure of what was next. But a man named Ananias comes to him, not with condemnation, not demanding answers, but with compassion. “Brother Saul,” he says.

Brother, a family term, a simple phrase says everything: you belong. You are not beyond reach. You are one of us.

Ananias listens to the voice of God telling him to go to this Saul—Saul man who had once persecuted people like him—and instead of reacting with fear or anger, he obeys. Ananias goes to Saul, listens to his

story, and blesses him. And it is through that act of listening and welcome that Saul begins to see again—literally and spiritually.

In the gospel reading from John, Jesus prays for those who will believe in him through the word of his disciples—not just for the ones already close to him, but for the ones still to come. Jesus is spiritually listening forward, holding space in prayer for people he has never met. Jesus doesn't pray for their success or status, but for their unity, for their closeness to one another and to the heart of God. Jesus models a love that listens across time, across difference, across generations.

What connects these two moments is this: calling begins when someone listens. Not when they take charge or make a grand statement—but when they dare to pay attention. Ananias listens to the Spirit and to Saul. Jesus listens to the hopes and needs of people still to come.

And that might seem like a small thing—listening. But in a noisy world, where people are so often shouting to be heard, real listening is radical. It's countercultural. And it can be life-changing.

Think about the people who have really listened to you—who've made space for your story, your struggle, your dreams. Not just waiting for their turn to speak, but genuinely hearing you. That kind of listening creates space for calling. For healing. For transformation.

We see it in community projects where volunteers sit alongside people experiencing homelessness—not to offer advice straight away, but to listen. To hear the person behind the label.

We see it in schools where teachers ask, “What’s going on for you today?” instead of jumping to telling off.

We see it in churches that make room for stories long ignored—stories of grief, exclusion, or doubt—and allow them to shape how the community grows.

We can practice that same listening in small ways. We can choose not to rush to fill silences. We can ask better questions and hold back on assumptions. We can honour someone’s story even if it makes us uncomfortable. And we can listen for the voice of the Spirit speaking through people we might not expect. People like Saul, whose calling came through a moment of vulnerability, and whose mission began because someone listened.

Listening won’t always feel grand or holy. But it is the ground where calling takes root. In listening, we make space for others to grow—and in doing so, we might just discover something new about ourselves too.

So today, let's consider:

Who might be waiting to be heard?

What might God be saying through the voices we've tuned out?

And where is the Spirit calling us to listen, before we act or speak?

Let us pray...

Loving and listening God,

You call us through stillness as much as through song,

Through whispered nudges as well as bold visions.

Teach us to listen.

Open our ears to those we've dismissed.

Open our hearts to stories we don't yet understand.

Give us the courage to sit with silence,

To hold space without fixing,

To believe that transformation begins in presence.

Shape us into a community of deep listening,

Where people discover their calling

Because they are finally heard.

In your holy name,

We pray.

Amen.