

Who am I? Today I shall be many people. I am your son, your daughter, your husband, your wife. I am your friend, I am the stranger who sits two rows in front of you at church. I am that person toward whom you bear a grudge. The woman who hurt you, the man who has suffered under your sharp I am the teenager whom you pass in the hall every Sunday morning. tongue. I am the one you know everything about, whom you have known forty years. I am your neighbor.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself, ^{Jesus commanded.} ~~That is what Jesus commanded.~~ ~~That is what we confessed this morning that we have not, done,~~ we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We will confess the same next week. What I have to say to you will not make you perfect. But it may help you, and me, your neighbor.

~~I want you to~~ ^{speaking for all of your neighbor days} listen to me. listen to me, with your ears and your eyes and your mind. My soul is lonely, full of fears and anxieties, doubts. ~~I~~ listen, not just to the words but for the feeling. Be patient as you listen, I am used to using words to hide myself from you, to fill in that space between us so that you will not get too close and see me as I am. Still I want you to listen.

Don't be like all the rest. As soon as I show them the gashed in my soul, they rush in with a bandaid to slap on the cuts. Advice, that is what the world gives me, Do this, do that, everything will be fine if you follow my directions. I don't want to be fi patched up, I want to be known and loved. Listen.

When you listen to me then you treat me as worthy of the most precious thing that you have, your time. You let everything stop and you travel at my pace for a minute, for an hour as you listen.

Listen. Hear my voice, see how I stand, look into my eyes, are they clear, are they troubled. Do not be afraid of my pain, my fears. Trust that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Almighty God can overcome all the darkness within me. Do not be afraid for me, or pity me, listen.

I am that person you are closest to, that you know so well. You seem to have the most trouble listening to me. I am your son, your daughter. Do you know me? Can you stop talking and commanding and directing my life long enough to listen. I am your husband, your wife. Can you listen forgetting every yesterday and see me in a new, fresh way? Listen. I am your mother, your father. Do you know me? Listen.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ^{love yourself?} If ^{you} listen to ^{me} you, might ^{you} not ^{do} so well to learn to listen to ^{yourself} ~~me~~ also. To hear the songs ^{your} ~~my~~ own heart sings, the light dancing melodies, the laments and painful dirges. ~~listen~~ ~~for what is really in here~~ ^{listen do} and not be afraid? ~~what voice cries out within me?~~ ^{do you cry out} Does ~~it~~ cry out for peace and quiet and rest and laughter. Listen.

God has. ~~And~~ does. He heard a whole world crying out under the weight and chains of sin. ~~xxxxxxx~~ First he listened. Then he came to bear the burden with us, for us. He gave his son Jesus Christ to suffer and die for us that we might ^{be freed to} confess the truth, we have not loved you God, with our whole heart, we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. ^{if that did it we might confess and then} ~~And~~ might arise from our confession, forgiven. ^{with ease of our hearts,}

God has promised to listen because he loves us. Call upon me in the day of trouble, he invites us. Ask and it will be give you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you Jesus said. God listens to you.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind. What does this mean? Listen. To love God is to listen to him. With open ears open ~~xxxxxx~~ heart, to let him pour into you the words from his heart. Listen.

In the gospel according to John, we read, in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Jesus Christ, the son of the Almighty God is the Word, Listen. And God will pour into you his power, which is faith. You will no longer be alone, and your fear will be overcome, and you will love God, and yourself, and your neighbor. Listen.