

Harden Not Your Hearts

Deuteronomy 18:15–20
Psalm 95:1–2, 6–7, 7–9
1 Corinthians 7:32–35
Mark 1:21–28

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Jesus amazes the people with his “authority.” His message differs from that of the scribes because he not only backs it up with signs (casting out demons), but its truth penetrates and quickens people’s hearts. God had promised Moses to send a prophet and to “put my words into his mouth” (Deuteronomy 18:18). Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of that promise and the people sense it. This man can’t be ignored, they realize. Because God’s prophet does his bidding and speaks his word, God expects us to listen to him. In fact, God warns, we’ll have to answer for ignoring any words the prophet speaks in his name (Deuteronomy 18:19). Moses reminds the people they wanted an intermediary, someone less intimidating than the awesome God who spoke to them in fire and thunder at Sinai. The irony is that God’s ultimate intermediary is his own divine Son. Today’s crowd understands the need to listen to him. And Paul does, too—that’s why he endorses an “undivided” life. Paul isn’t denigrating marriage, but emphasizing the need to be attentive to God’s Word as spoken in Jesus. Anything that distracts us from that should be eliminated. Single people know it’s no easier for them to hear and obey the Lord than married people. They, too, must eliminate distractions from their lives. It takes an open heart to recognize “a new teaching with authority” (Mark 1:27), and a generous heart to make room for it.



“What is this? A new teaching with authority” (Mark 1:27).

SHARING FAITH

- ◆ Do you know anyone who “speaks with authority”? What characterizes someone who possesses such authority?
- ◆ What do you know about the role of prophets in Israel? Do you think we have prophets today who are sent to speak God’s word?
- ◆ Have you become complacent about or hardened your hearts to some person or situation in your family, community, school, or workplace? If so, what can you do that you aren’t doing?

LIVING THE LITURGY

- ◆ Make a listing of all of Israel’s prophets (it will be shorter than you think). Which prophet do you know best? Why do you think prophets were often mistreated and seldom heeded in Israel’s history?
- ◆ What do you think it means to be “anxious about the things of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:32)? Are you anxious about those things in your life? Are many of the people you know?
- ◆ Baking cookies is a great accompaniment to discussion of softening hearts through love, caring, and sharing. If you don’t have heart-shaped cookie cutters or a desire to bake from scratch, purchase refrigerator dough, and mold hearts by hand. As an alternative, spread the dough in a pizza pan, bake for about as long as a sheet full of cookies, let cool slightly, flip the giant cookie onto a cake plate, and draw hearts on it with icing when it has completely cooled. The final appearance isn’t important as long as there’s lots of love rolled in!