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James 1: 19-27 *"Hearing and Doing"*

Listening Ears

I have found many times over the years a certain phase or thought during worship strikes a chord with me and I find myself reflecting on it in the days and sometimes weeks that follow.

This past Sunday as Sharon Beeler shared stories surrounding the Residential School atrocities, she made, what I believe to be a very profound comment. When asked what we can do now to move forward towards reconciliation her reply was "When you reach out, it is best to come with humility, it is best to come with open hearts and open ears and ask them what they need".

As I thought about her reply I began to see that this needs to be applied everyday to every situation.

I can't tell you how many times as a parent, a spouse, a friend, a colleague, a community member (the list goes on and on) I thought I knew the solution and that I could "fix the problem", "right the wrong", "make it all better". But did I really have an answer? Had I asked the right questions, and more importantly, had I waited for and listened to the response?

Many of us use an App or a navigation device if we are headed somewhere unfamiliar to us. Now these aids can be very helpful, but on occasion we have had situations where for one reason or another we did not end up where we thought we were going or we got there but the route was not the most direct. Did we experience that because we thought we knew the way and chose to ignore the directions given or did our device need to be updated with the latest set of maps. Life can be like that, we think we know the way and can navigate through a situation without listening to our directions or checking to see if our route needs to change because of a newer map.

Roger and I have a niece who is a teacher and has young children of her own and numerous times we have heard her say to a defiant young person "Are you using your listening ears?" I think that even as adults our "listening ears" are sometimes turned off or at least the volume is turned down and we miss the directions that God is giving to us.

Our service on Sunday ended with a smudging ceremony in which we ask for guidance and help to be mindful of everything and everyone around us. I have pulled the following smudging prayer from an online source;

I cleanse my Eyes so they will see the Truth all around me, allow my eyes to see the beauty I receive from Mother Earth and the Love I create within my family and my communities.

I cleanse my Mouth for truthful speaking. In my speaking words may I elevate my community. May I speak prayers of healing to Mother Earth.

I cleanse my ears so that I may Listen fully to the wisdom passed down from my ancestors, the creator, the Earth and my Spirit Guides. May I be open to hear the good and allow any negativities to slide off me.

I cleanse my heart so that I may be filled with compassion and gratitude. May my heart be in truth and grow with purity, balance and joy.

I cleanse my feet so they will guide us on this life's journey as a light and truth seeker. May my feet stay grounded and remind me of how to walk in balance, love, joy and in harmony with my family, friends, earth, sky, water, plant and animal worlds."

Lori Hyatt

P.S. We would love to share your Letter of Hope. Please send letters or ideas to us at Hyatt.le.rc@gmail.com for future publication.

*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

