



At a Distance

2nd Sunday After Epiphany

“The Little Piano”

Scripture References: 1 Samuel: 1-10, Psalm 139, 1Corinthians 13: 1-8
and John 1:43-51



Greetings Saints and welcome again to All Saints on behalf of
Mona and myself and our Worship Team today, Candy
Weatherby, Matthew Philbrook and Carol Burckhardt. We greet
you in a “good way” and thank you. The diversity and deep
spirituality that you bring to our Community of Faith is a blessing

and we treasure our time together both virtually and in-person. This morning our Epiphany Season continues as we move through this 6-week season of daily, ever-increasing Light. We were fueled for the trip last Sunday with the renewal of our Baptismal Covenant. Making our Sacred Promises yet again...before each other and before our Creator. In this Epiphany season of light, we continue to follow the Christmas Star and the Wisdom Keepers. As Wisdom Keepers ourselves, we continue to live into our Christmas Star Promise..." To Shine, To Brighten and to Lead" on our Jesus Way walk...one day, one decision at a time. Simply by "doing the next right thing" as we do our best to mindfully move through our days with as much courage, dignity, honor and grace as we can muster. Also, over the past weeks our watchfulness skills have been honed to be on the lookout to see and more importantly to HEAR, Creator's messages given in unique and creative ways. Today's Sacred Stories are wrapped in this theme of Sacred Listening...over and over we are gifted with it today. The child Samuel, the Apostle Paul, and Jesus' emerging Team of sacred teachers: listening, listening, and listening yet again. And so, in faithfulness to our Sacred Listening lessons in the Scriptures today, my message is entitled..." The Little Piano". You know...hearing and listening are very different activities, Saints. Very different realities. Hearing is a biological, chemical and electrical phenomenon ruled by the laws of physics. Listening

is an intellectual and spiritual pursuit ruled by the soul. We hear everything in our world, provided our biological mechanisms remain healthy. Hearing is like the grass catcher on the lawnmower. It collects everything in its path, without intentionality, or selectivity or prioritization. Listening is much different. Listening is about focus, about narrowing our perspective. Listening is about precision, accuracy and adsorption. And listing Saints, is not about us. It is not about “our story” or our point. It is not conjuring up our next reply or next rebuttal. In active listening, in Sacred listening, we become the canvas on which another’s story is painted. We become the score on which another’s music is written. We become the napkin on which another’s ideas are scribbled. Sacred Listening also comes with some riddles for us to solve after we have listened and processed and wrapped ourselves in the offerings received; “Why me? Why this? Why now?”

I am not really sure how “The Little Piano” got to All Saints. We are not blessed to know it’s history, ancestry or lineage. All we know is that it ended up on top of a pile of things scattered around our Babies in Need donation box outside the All Saints Parish Hall one morning. A child’s toy really, not a finely tuned instrument of music. Multicolored keys, connected to multicolored hammers, striking multicolored chimes. Not anywhere in tune, not musically accurate or precise in any way. But dependable...when

you strike a key, the hammer falls and a “note” of some frequency enters the natural world. To be heard...yes. To be listened to...maybe. Is it a parent’s nightmare or a child’s delight. I guess that depends if you are hearing or listening. We don’t know where “The Little Piano” had been, only where it ended up. Discarded or Gifted? Vastly different destinations, aren’t they? We will never know “the why” which brought The Little Piano to us. Only that its arrival was not grand or celebrated or honored. No, it lay quietly on the pile of stuff, its’ value questioned by many, it’s worth invisible to most.

The Little Piano’s journey was a quick one though after it came to All Saints. Mona and the Babies in Need Team scooped it up quickly to keep it out of the rain and gave it a safe and warm place to be inside the Babies in Need Building. The Little Piano became part of the large and diverse foster family of baby stuff that resides lovingly yet temporarily with Babies in Need...the strollers, highchairs, pack-and-plays, that all seem to make their way to new homes again in collaboration with our ministry partners at Happy Babies Southwest. All to be posted online and distributed free of charge to families who need. On Wednesday like every Wednesday, Mona and I loaded up all the baby things destined for Happy Babies Southwest and this week, The Little Piano came along for the ride. We left the Little Piano, much like we found it, only this time placed gently not on a pile of stuff, but on

an array of offerings...not discarded, but definitely gifted, not destined for the dump but hopefully emerging into a future with dignity and potential. That was the last we saw of The Little Piano until later Wednesday night...

So, at this point, you might be asking "Where is the listening in this story, Father Joe?" It is an excellent question and one that deserves a worthy answer. The listening, I think is in the recognition of worth, the potential for new life, new beginnings and the fulfilling of new dreams. Samuel was a young child, a servant, not learned or particularly singled out by society for greatness. Yet God Spoke and Samuel replied..." I am listening". No one else heard, yet Samuel listened. The disciples called today in our Gospel story were simple men following a simple fishers calling, until they listened to the voice of Jesus on the beach and their lives were changed forever. Paul was a Roman citizen, Christian persecutor, executor of Stephen hearing and believing all of the societal misinformation and disinformation of the day. Christians were evil, unpatriotic and dangerous, worthy only of a horrible death. Then Paul no longer heard...but listened and listened deeply and well to the voice of God as he was knocked from his horse, never to be the same again. And today we heard the result of that listening. Paul the former Executioner and Persecutor...crafting the most beautiful and complete definition of love ever created. Love is patient, love is kind. Love

is not boastful or arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful. Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. Love bears all things; believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends....and a new edit to this verse 8, a new addition if you will for today...Love always listens.

We did not expect to see or hear from or hear about The Little Piano ever again, after we left it in the care of "Happy Babies Southwest". We just trusted that it would go where it should. Then last Wednesday evening Mona and I were wrapped in our usual evening pattern. She with a bowl of popcorn and me with my tea, engaged in the next Netflix offering. When she started to laugh mightily, deep cleansing laughter, joy filled and big. Then some tears flowed as well, in respect to what she just witnessed. I said Babe, what's going on? And she said you have got to see this, and handed me her phone and on it was a small child playing the Little Piano. The Happy Babies Team had forwarded the video to Mona and Babies in Need with Mom's permission and deep gratitude and thanks and these words..." We would have never been able to afford to give this beautiful Little Piano to our Son. Thank you' from a grateful Mother and Child." And I looked at the video and there on the screen was a beautiful little boy, sitting Chris-cross-applesauce in in front of the Little Piano. Fingers flying, head and hair shaking in the Wind. His face dancing

with pure joy and the sounds from the fusion of his fingers, the keys, the hammers and chimes filled the entire space...at that moment filled his entire world. Playing music of his own, unique creation, in his own unrepeatable style...connected, fulfilled, joy-filled with smiling eyes, smiling lips, smiling heart. Exponential happiness; connectedness; divinity, joy and yes...I believe, liturgy. That night, in that place the Little Piano was exactly where it was supposed to be, fulfilling its calling to be a "God Birther". Led there by a loving and resourceful God, with some help from some willing accomplices along the way. As the awkward notes and uniquely crafted chords flew into the night sky, the child laughed, and Mother cried. And we sat in awe and watched the little miracle playing out before our eyes. And as the world heard but a cacophony of dissonance, the Child and the Little Piano listened to the Voice of God.

