

“I, John, . . . heard behind me a voice as loud as a trumpet . . .” Elsewhere in the book of Revelation (Rev 4:1) he calls it “a trumpet-like voice.” I got to thinking, what would it be like to hear a voice like a trumpet behind you? (trumpet sounds) It would probably be pretty shocking! Trumpets heralded kings, they were a sign of something important happening. In the Bible the loud sound of the shophar, a type of ancient trumpet, heralded the presence of God on Mount Sinai when Moses got the Ten Commandments. So, to be standing there, minding your own business, and suddenly hear a “voice as loud as a trumpet” sounding behind you – well, that would make you stand up straight!

But then my mind went from the spectacular to the somewhat silly. I got to thinking, probably because I just saw “You’re a Good Man Charlie Brown,” about the trumpet voice you hear in the Charlie Brown cartoons on TV. (Muted trumpet sounds) They use that to represent the sound of a teacher’s voice. Though I’m quite certain that’s NOT what John had in mind in the Book of Revelation, it does have some things to recommend it.

In the cartoons, we enter into the world of the Peanuts characters. Children, they are. Adults are part of a whole different world and those muted trumpet sounds nicely represent the interaction between the two worlds. And, it’s the voice of a teacher, maybe the voice of a parent! Someone who commands your attention! (Muted trumpet sounds) “Yes, Maam,” Charlie Brown would say politely.

The trumpet-like voice in the Book of Revelation is a voice that commands our attention, the voice of authority, and a voice from a whole different world than the one we live in. It’s the voice of our teacher, Christ the Lord, the “first and the last, he one who lives,” the one who was dead but now lives forever and ever. He makes us stand up, take notice, “Yes Sir!” we might say to his trumpet-like voice.

Except . . . we often think a little bit too much like the kids in the Charlie Brown stories. Although those trumpet-like voices command their attention, and they heed those voices, they do not really give their hearts over to them. Adult voices are something the kids have to put up with, something they follow, but more or less against their will.

Do we see the voice of God that way? Do we think of God as being a part of that other, annoying, world that is always trying to interfere with our plans? True, when it comes to our relationship with God, He’s the adult, we’re the kids, but do we really have to act like kids?

“On the evening of that first day of the week” when Jesus first appeared to his disciples after the Resurrection, in spite of locked doors, he invited them to a deeper relationship than that. To try to explain, I’ll speak of the end of today’s gospel passage: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.”

Notice how it calls them “signs” not proofs. Notice also,

in the description of the incident with Thomas, it doesn't say that Thomas actually put his hands into Jesus' wounds. Just seeing him may have been enough to draw out Thomas' response "My Lord and my God." Finally, realize that seeing Jesus as one's Lord and God is something more than anything you could tell by seeing him or putting your hands into his wounds.

"Seeing is believing" we say, but it's not, not really. Believing is a different kind of thing. "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." Sometimes we regret that we did not get to see Jesus' miracles, or his body risen from the dead. Some people kind of invent miracles, or see them where they do not exist, in order to try to build up their faith. There are miracles, it's hard to explain the impact Jesus had without them, but we mustn't base our faith on them. If somebody comes along and explains what we thought was a miracle, that kind of faith falters. Miracles only invite faith, they do not force one to believe, faith comes from a deeper place.

There is a place deep within us where we are longing for something . . . someone. And it's that deeper place where Jesus wishes to speak with us, the place where he draws us to our part in his mission: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

Let us leave childish ways behind. Let us realize that the trumpet-like voice is not the voice of external and unwelcome control over us, but a voice that has our best interests at heart, the voice of love calling us to be who we were meant to be.