

A PAGE FROM THE LONG AND AMAZING HISTORY OF ST. STEPHEN AND THE INCARNATION EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Hearing the Word

Following the publication of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, a group of parishioners turned their attention **to the Bible itself**. None of the commonly-accepted translations available in the 1970s and 1980s attempted to use gender-neutral language. Given the English language's inherent bias towards the masculine gender, the original meaning of the Bible was often restricted or obscured. Nor was there a translation that focused on making scripture easier to hear—which is an important aspect of worship. Thus was born *Hearing the Word*.

"Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, **that they may be praised by men**. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

-Matthew 6:1-3, Revised Standard Version

hearing the word: an inclusive-language liturgical lectionary

FOR Year C of
the Common Lectionary



1988 edition

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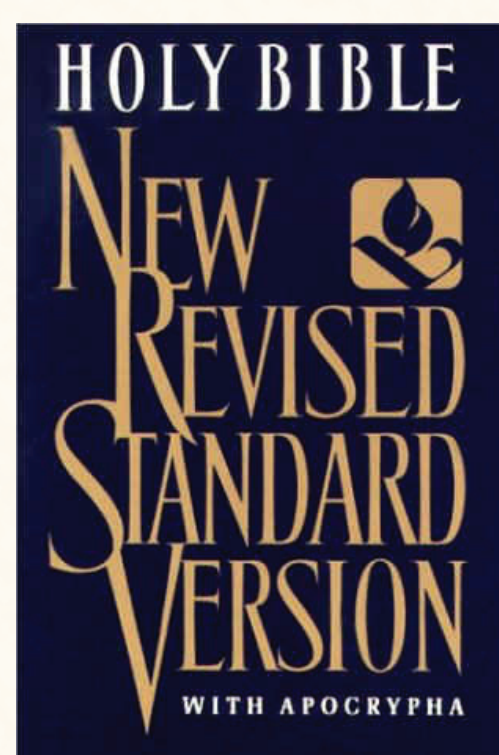
[Jesus said:] "Be careful not to make a public show of your good deeds, for if you do, you will then have no reward from your [God] in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with fanfare, as the hypocrites do **to win people's admiration** in the synagogues and in the streets. The truth is, such hypocrites have thereby received all the reward they are going to get. But when you give to the needy, do so in private, so privately that your own left hand does not know what your right is doing. And then your [God], who sees what is done in private, will reward you.

-Matthew 6:1-3, *Hearing the Word*

An example of **making lessons easier to hear**: *Hearing the Word* used "inheritor" instead of "heir", to avoid confusion with "air," as in Romans 4:14:

"If it is to be the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void." (NRSV)

"If those who hold by the law are to be the inheritors, then trust is pointless and [God's] promise is worthless." (HtW)



The first edition of *Hearing the Word* followed the Book of Common Prayer's lectionary; a second edition followed the common lectionary. In all, over 500 lections were revised by parishioners.

In the 1980s and 1990s, **St. Stephen's sold thousands of copies of *Hearing the Word*** to churches around the world who were dissatisfied with the then-existing Bible translations.

Today, we use the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which was translated with gender-neutrality as one of its goals. We no longer use or sell *Hearing the Word*.

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