

Juliette J. Day. *Hearing Our Prayers: An Exploration of Liturgical Listening*. Liturgical Press Academics, 2024. 225pp. \$49.95.

Hearing Our Prayers is innovative in its focus on the reception of sound in worship. The author approaches worship from a listening-centered perspective. The author highlights listening as a core liturgical practice, noting that its central role in worship has not been sufficiently emphasized in ecclesial practice or academic discourse (1–2). Day attends to worshippers’ auditory participation and examines the reception of the diverse and complex sounds in worship. By doing so, this book encourages readers to delve into what it means to listen liturgically.

This research offers a multifaceted analysis of the sounds and their reception. Chapter 1 introduces the concept of “liturgical soundscapes,” which articulates the complexity and totality of liturgical sound. This term describes the distinctive auditory environment of worship shaped by cultural and contextual factors. Based on the notion of listening as an interface between the environment and the listener, the author explores the reception of ephemeral liturgical sounds by examining the circumstances. Chapter 2 considers listening as an active, essential liturgical practice involving both God and worshippers. This theology shapes the chapters that follow. Chapter 3 makes attentive listening to ritual sounds integral to ritual action by arguing that listening necessarily accompanies ritual (56). Moreover, the term “ritualized listening” highlights listening itself as a ritual act (65). Chapter 4 deals with liturgical speech and music as central intentional sounds in liturgy. It discusses their functions in fostering communal identity.

Chapters 5 and 6 expand the discourse by incorporating silence and noise that have often been overlooked in discussions of liturgical listening. Chapter 5 explores the theological reception of silence, conceptualizing it as a form of liturgical sound. The author specifies various types of silence in the context and purpose of worship, appreciating their values. Chapter 6 reconsiders sound that has been classified as “noise” in worship. Chapter 7 presents aural attentiveness as a requisite capacity for liturgical listening. Chapter 8 examines aural architecture and furnishing, which shape the spatial and acoustic dimensions of liturgical soundscapes.

Regarding this book’s strengths, first, Day introduces listening as a hermeneutical practice. She is concerned with how worshippers interpret sounds in worship, attending to their theological significance. Specifically, it reconsiders the values of silence and noise. For instance, she recognizes silence as a form of “sound” to be listened to (97) and interprets it as the place where divine hearing and divine silence reside (103, 116). Likewise, noise is reexamined from a more neutral perspective to avoid negative value judgments. Through theological reflection in a liturgical context, the author distinguishes between “noise as disruption” and “noise as a socially constructed category of otherness” (129).

Second, in relation to homiletics, the book highlights attentive listening as an essential liturgical practice in the preaching event. By recognizing the audience as “co-authors of the sermon,” Day encourages readers to perceive them as active participants in the preaching process (69). Furthermore, she emphasizes the role of the preacher as listener, insofar as preachers themselves listen to the Word of God (67–68). The book also invites readers to understand

preaching fundamentally as an aural event, even as sermons are increasingly visualized in the digital age. How the preacher's voice is produced, mediated, and transmitted in a designated space facilitates a deeper consideration of what preaching as sound means in a digital world.

A few minor suggestions may be offered. In contemporary worship contexts, the significance of digitally mediated sounds and the digital media that transmit them continues to grow. It would be worthwhile to consider how these sounds might be interpreted and negotiated with the discussion of this book. In addition, the book would benefit from greater attention to those without auditory capacity; thus, further exploration of how deaf or hard-of-hearing participants experience liturgical sounds would be a valuable extension.

Overall, this book is provocative in that it places listening at the very center of liturgical theology. Day's consideration of the theological and liturgical values and functions of listening renews prevailing understandings of listening and the listener. This reexamination and redefinition provide significant insight into how sounds in worship ought to be received and interpreted. Moreover, her research strengthens the integrity between liturgical listening, liturgical speaking, and ritual engagement, thereby suggesting ways to foster worshippers' full and active participation.

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