

Be Careful How you Hear

Luke 8:4-21

Sermon 2 “Hearing, Receiving and Doing the Word of God”

1. The lesson: Be careful how you hear (He who has ears let him hear)
 - a. Matthew 13:19 (Luke 8:7)
 - b. Matthew 13:43
 - c. Rev 2,3 letters to churches
 - d. Mark 4:24
 - e. Luke 8:18
 - f. Echoes OT Concern and instruction
 - i. Dt. 5:1; 6:4; 9:1
 - ii. Dt. 1:43-45
2. Why is careful hearing important? Careful listening is important because of the nature of our hearts. Because listening is the way the truth of God gets into our hearts (Reading is important yes, but there is power attendant with the spoken word)
 - a. Our hearts are hard and hardened
 - i. insensitive, callous, seared
 - ii. disobedient
 - iii. rebellious
 - iv. proud—no one can tell him anything.
 - v. By nature we hate and are inclined to hate the truth of God

James Boice writes here

“Virtually all of God’s attributes—whether sovereignty, holiness, omniscience, immutability, or even the divine love—are offensive to the natural man, if properly understood. So rather than repent of sin and turn for mercy to God who is altogether sovereign, holy, knowing, and unchangeable, men and women suppress what knowledge they have and refuse to seek out that additional knowledge they that could be the salvation of their souls.”

- vi. By the lies and false answers that come to us all the time. We are always being asked to listen to something—there is so much noise in our world, so many competing voices, so many lies, half lies—even in the church.

- b. Our hearts are shallow
 - i. We tend toward experiences
 - ii. We love and depend on our emotions
 - iii. We are lazy and look for easy ways to get the growth and progress—and the experiences we want

“Like disobedient children, people do not want to listen. Even believers, habituated in ways of disobedience, have great difficulty listening to God.” This is important because “When people listen to God in repentance, faith, and obedience, God pours out his blessing on them. When they ignore God’s Word in favor of the counsel of the ungodly and treat it lightly, he sends a curse. (Jay Adams)

- iv. Is this not the warning Paul gives to Timothy in II Tim 4... itching ears? (you and I have itching ears you know) Why else would churches turn out and reject faithful gospel preaching and truth telling pastors as they do?
- c. Our hearts are distracted—seeds of weeds, full grown weeds transplanted
 - i. Cares of the world—the daily concerns of life and health and job and marriage and children and the world and politics and the state of the world—diseases, terrorists, and so forth
 - ii. Riches: money, getting money, and getting the things that money
 - 1. can buy
 - 2. promises to give—security, status, ease, comfort
 - iii. pleasures of this life—the delights of this world and its distractions— soul ruining entanglements“ like a proliferating cancer, or a devastating parasite little by little destroying the host. And what are they? They are ,many their name could be legion (many)
 - 1. video games, computer games
 - 2. TV, Movies, Music
 - 3. Exercise, dieting,
 - 4. hobbies
 - 5. adventure
 - 6. travel
 - 7. food and drink
- d. Because getting the Word, getting the Word’s effectiveness in my heart is at least in part dependent on you as the tiller of the soil. Three wring approaches:
 - i. The word is in and of itself immediately powerful and effective
 - 1. Isa. 55:11
 - 2. Heb 4:12
 - ii. The word is too hard to understand—the basics of the Gospel are all I need—
 - 1. The Gospel is important, it is primary—What is it?
 - 2. But we are not to stop there!
 - 3. It is good to remind ourselves of James Boice’s warning.
 - a. Easy steps
 - b. one time zap
 - c. give up
 - iii. This preacher doesn’t reach me. It’s the preacher’s fault. He is boring, irrelevant, confusing, It is up to the pastor to make the Word clear, understanding and relevant—and in an engaging and entertaining manner. If I don’t get anything it is his fault and not mine. It is possible that when not much is gotten out of the preaching that there is fault with the preacher
 - 1. He could be a poor speaker

2. He could use poor grammar
 3. he could be trying to hard to be deep and instead is just muddy
 4. It is possible that he is not really called and anointed for preaching—he may not even be saved.
 5. He could be trying to show off his abilities and knowledge and not trying to exalt God and help his listeners.
 6. There are some preachers who will talk *about* the Bible more than they talk *to* the congregation *from* the Bible.
- iv. Preaching is a two-way street
1. Jay Adams: “Preaching is not a one-way street—the responsibility for what transpires when the Bible is proclaimed does not rest solely on the shoulders of the preacher—Effective preaching demands competence from all participants. (Jay Adams, p. 8
 2. ”The Scripture has more to say about the listener’s responsibility to hear, understand, implement the message than about the preacher’s obligation to faithfully preach it.” p. 9
3. #2 Why is careful listening important? Because we are commanded to shine with what we have heard—to tell the good news and the truth to others.
 - a. Matthew 28:18, 19
 - b. I Peter 3:15
 - c. How can we tell what we have not fully and properly heard? For many of us retelling the gospel is a mishmash of half-learned facts told like the children’s game of telephone.
 - d. It is wrong, and disobedient for us to keep what we’ve been given –the light of truth—under the bed or under a basket
 4. #3 Why is careful listening important? Because the Word is given to us as a search light to show us those things in our lives that are harmful to us, displeasing to God, harmful to others. And if we fail to give attention to those things and bring them to God for his cleansing, healing, changing, reforming—then we will bring them before his judgment.
 - a. Psalm 139
 - b. Psalm 73
 - c. Will you want everything brought to light? The Word of God is given to bring those things to light that are wrong so that we can bring them under the cross.
 5. #4 Why is careful listening important? Because a lack of listening and hearing and using will result in what we have been given being taken away from us! There is no neutral—we will be either gainers or losers with the Word. Hearing and using will make us gainers; ignoring, refusing and rejecting the Word will make us losers.
 - a. This is the lesson of the parable—the three bad soils have no fruit

A. W. Tozer: "Whatever keeps me from the Bible is my enemy, however harmless it may appear to be, Whatever engages my attention when I should be meditating on God and things eternal does injury to my soul. Let the cares of life crowd out the Scriptures from my mind and I have suffered loss where I can least afford it. Let me accept anything else instead of the Scriptures and I have been cheated and robbed to my eternal confusion. A.W. Tozer

6. So how should I listen, what does it mean to take care how I listen?
 - a. Come to hear the word expectantly. What will God say to me through his word today?
 - b. Come preparedly
 - i. proper rest—have a Jewish attitude towards the Lord's Day—let yours begin on Saturday evening. It's easier to be self-disciplined about getting up than it is going to bed—get rest. Quiet down early.
 - ii. Proper abstinence from worldly distractions and entertainments—especially the night before
 - iii. Food and drink
 - iv. Readiness when arriving
 - v. Attention during the singing, Scripture reading and prayers—in other words being engaged in all of the worship service, with all of its elements—they are all important, they are not preliminaries or emotional warm up activities.
 - vi. having read and meditated on Scripture during the week—Do not make the really foolish and stupid decision to allow what is done on Sunday to be your only intake of God's word. As you read during the week make note of themes and issues that connect your daily reading to the sermon you heard on Sunday. Take time to go over the Scripture that is to be preached, go over your notes from last week, jot down important points, write down questions you may still have or will have about the passage tomorrow. Notes and sermons are available each week on the web site
 - c. Come prayerfully
 - i. For the preacher—He is prone to distractions, forgetfulness, self-serving, pride, discouragements, confused thoughts, even misplaced or lost sermon notes!
 - ii. For yourself
 1. confession of sin(s)
 2. that you will desire the pure and sincere milk of the Word
 3. that you will be attentive and not distracted
 4. that you will be the owner of the good and honest heart from verse 15 that bears fruit.

5. that you would not have itching ears for the wrong things!
 6. That you would be wise and know how to discern error.
- d. Come vigilantly remembering that your enemy prowls about looking for someone to devour—that he send the birds to come and snatch away the good seed, that he will seek to plant horrible thoughts in your mind and to lull you to sleep.
 - e. But also come humbly
 - i. ready to learn--teachability
 - ii. without grumbling and criticism
 - iii. forbearing with one another in love
 - f. Come regularly—weekly, stay with the flow of what is being taught in your church.
 - g. Come to listen expositionally

<http://www.newattitude.org/media/WhatIsAHealthyChMember.pdf>

 - i. What it is—Listening for the main idea, following the flow and outline...
 - ii. why it is important (see link above for four benefits)
 - h. Come to help your children learn to listen to the sermon and grow from it—the word of God is for children too. (The article by Noel Piper <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/articles/the-family-together-in-gods-presence/print>) and the Book “Parenting in the Pew”
 - i. Leave with the commitment to talk about the sermon that day. Over lunch—don’t allow yourself to get caught up in the day’s activities, sports, shopping even family things without taking time to talk through what you have experienced.
 - j. Leave with the commitment to put the sermon into practice.—We will talk about this more next week when we look at verses 19-21.

10. Conclusion

ADDITIONAL NOTES

* Third reason why we need to be careful listeners

Here is what Philip Ryken writes on this passage: (Commentary on Luke Vol. 1 p. 373)

"Eventually the real truth [about the reality of one's conversion and Christianity] will come out. In a universe that is governed by an all-seeing and all-knowing God, nothing can be hidden forever...

"When Jesus spoke about secrets coming to the light, he may have been referring to the final judgment. The Bible says [that there will be a time when all secrets are made known--e.g. Eccl. 12:14 and Rom. 2:16]. On that awesome day, God will hold us accountable for every word that we have ever heard. Then it will come out: all

the things that we have done and all the things that we have left undone will be exposed. And if we fail to do what God has says in his word--to believe the gospel, for example, or to keep the commandments, or to fl our calling in the world--then eventually this will come to light. If we hide what we have been given, our sins will fins us out.

" the practical application of this warning is obvious: we need to be very careful how we respond to God;s word."

This is a bit different than what I said yesterday. I know that all of us have areas of our lives where we have failed to live in a manner worthy of our calling. Those areas cause us to blush with shame when we think of the judgment. The paradox (if that is the right word) is that even in this exposure-judgment, the sins of the believer are then covered by the blood at the cross. I can only think that this means that we will rejoice in the added understanding of the grace given to us even in our shame. It cannot be that we will be judged in the sense of punishment at this secret exposing, but that we will be shown for who have been and then shown for who we are in Christ.

In the context of the passage (poor heart soil, hidden lamp, and losing even what has been given if not used) I think that the emphasis is probably more on the exposure of those who have refused to obey the gospel call than it is on those who have failed to live upto the totality of the gospel life requirements.

Another commentator, Michael Wilcox writes, "It is impossible anyway to permanently to hide where one stand in relation to the gospel. What is hidden will come out sooner or later--that is, it will it it is really there. The danger is...that he man who thinks that he has received the gospel,and keeps it hidden and never lets the fact be known, may find one of these days, when he comes to look for the reality of the gospel within him, that it is not in fact there--and never was."