

Well we return to our study of Luke chapter 8 this morning, so I hope you will take your Bible out and turn there with me. As we begin, I want to just read you this quote I found this week as I was studying. David Clarkson, a Puritan wrote these words and I think it sets up what we're going to talk about this morning: Hearing is the provision made for the soul's eternal well-being, its everlasting welfare depends on it; if you fail here, your souls perish without remedy. For salvation comes by faith and faith comes by hearing. It is an act of eternal consequences. According to our hearing, so shall the state of our souls be to eternity. (Expository Listening, p.8)

I think we would all agree that hearing is a precious thing. We don't take that for granted. But to think of it in those terms...hearing as *the provision made for the soul's eternal well-being*. God gave us ears so that we could hear His Word and be saved. That is how important it is that we have these things on the side of our head. According to our hearing, so shall the state of our souls be to eternity. That is a profound statement, isn't it, that is a sobering reality. How you hear, how well you listen, what you do with what you hear, has eternal consequences. Well, that is the theme of the passage that we are studying now in Luke chapter 8. And, this morning we're going to be looking at verses 16-21.

You remember that last week we covered the parable of the soils. Massive crowds had been coming out to hear Jesus preach and so He turns to them and to the disciples and tells them this parable about a sower sowing seeds. And the point of it is just to illustrate how various people respond to the word of God. Some don't respond at all; they're like the road, the seed falls on it just lies there, never germinates, gets trampled under foot or plucked up and eaten by the birds. Others are like rocky soil where the seed germinates, but there's no...there's no...root, there's no moisture, and so it's just sort of an emotional, immediate response, but no endurance, the first trial or test or temptation causes them to fall away. Then there are those who are like the seed sown among thorns, the seed germinates and it grows up, but is eventually choked out by the worries of the world, or the deceitfulness of riches, or the pleasures of this life. The sin in that soil was never cleansed away, never dealt with, never forsaken, and in time it just takes over again. Only the fourth response is the response of true saving faith, in verse 15. The good soil are those who hear the word in an honest and good heart, hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

Now that parable is meant to be a warning it is meant to be a warning, first to the disciples. "When I send you out to scatter seed, preach the gospel, just realize how it's going to be. Not everyone is going to respond positively to the you, to your message, to your ministry. That's not your fault. It's not the seed, it's not the sower, it's the soil. Different soils will yield different results. So be prepared for that and don't let that discourage you from sowing. But it's also meant to be a warning to the crowds; these massive throngs of people that were coming out from every city and village to hear Jesus preach, saying to them "Examine your hearts; make sure that you are really sincere and listening with the right heart attitude, eager to receive the truth, ready to respond in humility and repentance and obedience.

What's interesting about that parable is that each soil heard. They all hear the word. Verse 12, "those beside the road are those who have heard"; verse 13, "those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear"; verse 14, "the seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard"; verse 15, but "the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart and hold it fast and bear fruit with perseverance." So they all hear, but they don't all hear the same way. That's the point. And that is why, as He told the parable, vs.8 says, "He called out, He who has ears to hear, let him hear." In other words, there's hearing and there's hearing. There's hearing and there's listening. Make sure that when you are hearing, you are really listening.

And so the implication is, a lot of people, all these different people, hear the word, but they don't all hear. They don't all hear the same way. And so that raises the question, "well what's the right way to hear?" "I want to be one of those that hear, really hear." How are we then to hear so that we make sure we really are listening and really getting it? Well, that's what this next part is about. Verse 16 and following, listen to what it says.

16 "Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lamp stand, in order that those who come in may see the light. 17 "For nothing is hidden that shall not become evident, nor anything secret, that shall not be known and come to light. 18 "Therefore take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him shall more be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him." 19 And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. 20 And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You. 21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

Now when you first kind of read that, you think... that just sounds like three random statements followed by an awkward family incident you know...what is it all about? But it is all related. The key phrase that ties it all together is verse 18. "*So take care how you listen.*" It's all about listening. This whole section is about listening. He's just expanding on the theme of the parable, now turning it to your responsibility as the hearer. "Take care how you listen." And literally it's "*see how you hear.*" "Look how you listen." Take heed to that. Make sure you really listen carefully. That's what the parable of the soils was about, and that's what this part is about. And that's a pervasive theme throughout Scripture. Right, you know that. Deut.5:1 – *Hear O Israel, the statutes and ordinances which I am speaking in your hearing that you may learn and observe them carefully.*" Ps.81:8 – *Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you; O Israel, if you would listen to Me! Oh that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways.* 35 x in the OT, we see that phrase "hear the word of the Lord". In the New Testament, Matt.17:5...we have the incident when Jesus was on the mount of Transfiguration and you hear this voice out of the cloud saying – "*This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased, listen to Him.*" "Listen to Him." Heb.1:1 says, God has spoken...God has spoken "*In many portions and in many ways, and now in these last days, He has spoken in one more sort of final climactic way through His Son.*" "Listen to Him." So the question is, how well do we do that?

I thought about how precious the word of God is....that it is inspired, God-breathed, that it's perfect, inerrant, absolutely true and precise in every word, every detail, preserved so carefully and accurately for us all through the centuries....But, what good if we, on the receiving end, the hearing end are sloppy or careless or lazy about our part. We should listen to God's Word with the same devotion to accuracy as the inspired authors who wrote it were.

In Isaiah, you hear the heart of God calling out to all mankind, Isa.55:2, "*Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live.*"

Jesus echoes that in John 5, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live.*"

Those who hear shall live. Listen that you may live. That's the recurring theme in Scripture. That is the drum that beats in the background. Like a loving father passionately pleading with his children, that is what God is saying to us. "Listen to Me; Hear me; incline your ear; Listen that you may live. So how can we take heed to our hearing and make sure that we are listening carefully in the way that honors God and leads to life? Well right here in this text Jesus tells us how to listen....how to listen to the word of God. And this applies whether you're at home reading the Bible on your own, or whether you're sitting here listening to a sermon. This is how you need to listen.

4 ways to listen well.

1. Listen...listen to the word of God like it's dark and you need light.

Verse 16 says, "Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light." This is just a simple analogy, kind of a....almost a proverb, an axiom. You don't light a lamp and then cover it. You don't light it and then shove it under the bedroll or bedmat. You light it to give light. The whole point of lighting the lamp is so it can illumine the room, so you put it up high on a lampstand or up on a shelf so that "*those who come in may see the light.*" It's a simple analogy, right? What's the purpose of the lamp? Light. Why do you need light? Because it's dark. What's the problem with dark? You can't see. What do you need to see? The way to the frige! *Laughter* Or, whatever.

This is just a picture of Jesus and His teaching. And we were introduced to this way back in chapter 1 of Luke... Luke 1:78, "*the sunrise from on high will visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*" Luke 2:32, "*a light of revelation to the Gentiles,*[that's what Jesus is] *and the glory of your people Israel.*" So the Light has come. The lamp has been lit. Jesus is the light of the world. John 1:9 says, "Jesus is the light that enlightens every man." John 8:12, "*I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.*" John 9:5 He said, "*While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.*" So, the point is He has come into the world as the light, and the light comes into the world to reveal, to illumine, to displace the darkness, to make it possible for us to see. The light comes to guide our feet into the way of peace; that only works if while the light is lit, we walk by it. It doesn't do any good for the light to be lit if we don't allow it to guide us.

But that's exactly what people do. That's the point of the proverb. If it would be foolish, if it would be ridiculous to cover a lamp or put it under the bed, then why, while the light is available, do you not walk in it? That's like walking into a room, you know....you walk into a room and you reach to find a light switch and you turn it on, but then you cover your eyes. Or, close your eyes and fumble around in the room. You just nullified the purpose of the light and the benefit of the light. You do that...it can't do you any good, you might as well turn it off, you might as well not have the light if you're not going to be guided by it, illumined by it.

So this is an analogy for how we are to listen. We are to listen to God's Word like it's pitch dark and we need every flicker of light we can get to find our way. I mean have you ever been in a cave. And you get way back into the cave and it's pitch dark...you can't even see your hand in front of your face...and then someone says, "Oh, by the way, did anyone bring a flashlight?" One person did and now everyone is like desperate to be around that person. That's kind of the picture. We need to listen to God's Word like we're all lost in a cave with one flashlight. We need to listen to God's word like we're lost in the woods at night and there's and the only source of direction we have is there's a thunderstorm in the distance and every few seconds a lightning beam that streaks across the sky and enlightens the whole sky and for that brief moment we can see and make a little progress.

That's what the word of God is – light. *A light of revelation to the Gentiles.* In this world you have darkness, in the word you have light. That's all you have. Walk in it. Ps.119:105, "your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." That's right. The light is there to guide you, to lead you, to illumine your way through this dark world. Prov.6:23, "for the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light, and reproofs for discipline are the way of life." When the electricity goes out and you're scrambling around for a candle or a flashlight and you finally find one, there's a collective sigh of relief, right, "ahhhhhh we can see." That should be our attitude to the commands and teachings and reproofs of Scripture. Without them we can't find our way.

So that's how you need to think of it. The light has been given because it's dark and you're lost and you don't know the way. Are you listening to God's word like that? Like you're flying with zero visibility and all you can go by is your instrument panel. Like you're lost in downtown Houston and your navigation system is all you've got. Are you going to listen when Nancy Nextstar, Nextel...we always give them names....the little computer voice, "turn right in 1000 feet." Are you going to do that or are you going to go by your instincts and mute the voice of that navigation system?

I think that's what Jesus is saying....you know....if you're not going to look and pay attention and be guided by the light that's been given then what's the point of it even being lit? The word of God is a *lamp to our feet, a light unto our path.* Listen like it's dark and you need its light.

2. Listen like judgment's coming and you want to be right with God now.

Listen like judgment's coming and you want to be right with God now. Verse 17, "For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light." Now there are a number of views on what that is talking about, but it seems to me in this context what He's saying is light not only illumines, but it also exposes. "Don't ignore the light, don't cover the light, or smother the light, walk in it, let it guide you, let it direct you. Why? Verse 17, "*for nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light.*" In other words, you can't hide. Whatever's hidden now will be exposed; whatever's secret now will be known. That's the nature of the light, it exposes, it makes manifest what is secret or hidden in the darkness. So the point is if you know that, then *listen like it*. Listen like you know that. Listen to the word of God like you know that every hidden thing in your life is about to be exposed and you don't want it to be exposed, you want it to be gone, to be removed. When that closet flies open you want it to be clean...you don't want stuff falling out. So, this is a warning against hypocrisy. Chapter 12 makes that clear, chapter 12 verse 1, He says....Jesus "under these circumstances after so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they were

stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." He says, beware of that, beware of hypocrisy. He sees the massive crowds stepping on each other and He knows that in all this crowd of people there are probably lots of hypocrites. And He says to His disciples don't be one. Beware of hypocrisy. Beware of being like the Pharisees, who on the outside look perfectly fine, but inwardly the leaven of hypocrisy permeates them. Don't be that....don't be a phony like that. Verse 2, "But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops." Whooa. That's kind of convicting. What He's saying is.... the truth will come out. The real you will be exposed. And so don't be a hypocrite. Be genuine, be sincere, make sure that you deal with the hidden things, the secret things in your life now so you won't have to face the embarrassment and humiliation of full exposure later.

Instead of living with guilt and always being afraid that someone may sneak into your house and find you know your hidden stack of porn magazines, wouldn't it be easier just to get rid of it? Get it out. Instead of sneaking off to smoke or drink or gamble, wouldn't it be better to just quit? Instead of playing along and coming to church with your family just to keep up appearances with your family or friends, wouldn't it be better to get saved and really want to be here? That's what He's talking about? The hypocrisy will be exposed. Wouldn't you rather have it exposed by the word of God now in private rather than by the judgment of God later in public? So listen like you know that's going to happen. God already knows. Ps.69:5 says, "O God, You know my folly, and my wrongs are not hidden from You." Eccl.12:14 says "for God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil." 1 Cor.4:5 Paul says Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. Heb.4:13 says, "there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare." You hunters, you know what that's like....laid bare is that cut you make that opens the animal up....laid bare.....to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. If you know that, we listen to the word of God like you know that, like you want it to expose us now not later. And we should pray that. Ps.19:12 – "who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults." That's in the context of extolling the virtues of Scripture. The word of God is there to expose what's hidden. Lord, let it do that.

So *listen* to the word of God like it's a searchlight probing the dark corners of your life. *Listen* to have your sin exposed. *Listen* to have any area of hypocrisy or inconsistency revealed. So that you can deal with it now and not have to explain it later. Another way to say that.....Listen to the word of God like it's an MRI scanning your body for cancer. Listen like it's your doctor coming in with the test results. I want to know what's in there. Tell me, Lord. What's in there? Show me. Let your word expose what's really there so I can deal with it....I'd rather deal with it now than later. If you will listen to the word of God like that every time, you will not have anything to fear in the judgment.

3. Listen like you could lose everything if you miss something.

Listen like you could lose everything if you miss one thing. Verse 18, so "take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him shall more be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him." What does He mean by that? *Use it or lose it*. That's what He's saying. What you do (every time) with what you hear determines whether you get more or no more. If you respond properly to spiritual blessings, you get more; if you don't, you don't. In fact you may get what you already have or what you think you have taken away from you. So it's just the principle of *use it or lose it*.

Jesus repeated that principle in (Luke) chapter 19. When He told the parable of the Master, the slave owner who went away and entrusted His slaves with 10 slaves with 10 minas and then he came back and one slave said your one mina, has brought you 10 more....good job. The other, your one mina has made 5 more....excellent. Then the other guy..."here's your one mina....I didn't lose it." Jesus, the Master would say to Him, "yeah, but you didn't use it. So now you will lose it and took it away and gave it to the other." That's what He's talking about here. The Master is looking for faithfulness. The Master is looking for faithful stewardship. He requires fruitfulness, productivity, putting to good use what He's given us. If we do that, He gives us more; if we don't do that, He may take away what we already have and gives it someone else.

This is a warning to be a good steward of what has already entrusted to you. If God has blessed you, listen, and put you in a Christian home, are you making the most of that? If you are in a good church where you hear sound Bible teaching week end and week out, are you making the most of that? If you've heard the gospel one time are you making the most of that. If you don't, God is under no obligation to continue to give you such privileges and opportunities. So you need to make sure that your life is bearing fruit consistent with the privilege and opportunity that He's given you. You better make sure the Lord is getting a good return on His investment or He may invest elsewhere.

So you need to listen to the word of God as if how you listen *this time* and what you do with what you hear *this time* will determine whether there's a *next time*. That's what He's saying. So you kind of want to listen like someone seeking a promotion, right? Listen like someone hoping to get a raise. Listen to the word of God like it's Math, and if you get one part wrong, you get the whole thing wrong. Listen like there's going to be a test and it's comprehensive.

Thomas Watson wrote,

If you would hear the word aright, practice what you hear.... Hearing only will be no plea at the day of judgment – merely to say, "Lord, I heard many sermons." God will say, "What fruits of obedience have you brought forth?" The word preached is not only to inform you but reform you.... If you hear the word, and are not bettered by it...your hearing will [only] increase your condemnation.

Take heed how you listen. Listen like it's dark and you need light. Listen like judgment's coming and you want to be right with God now. Listen like you could lose everything if you miss one thing.

4. Finally, Listen like your family identity depends on what you do with what you hear.

Listen like your family identity depends on what you do with what you hear. That's the principle I glean from verses 19-21. His brothers and mother were coming to find Him, the crowds were so large they can't even get to Him so they just start passing word, "would you tell Jesus we're here and maybe have someone get up there and tell Him and He'll come back and word finally trickled down to Him and he sent word and He just kind of looked around at the crowd and answered, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

He isn't being disrespectful, here. He's isn't dishonoring His mother or His brothers. He's not *minimizing* the importance of family relationships. He's *defining* His family relationships. "You're part of My family," Jesus says...and this is true for us, you're a part of His family "if you hear the word of God and do it." This is how you define who belongs to Christ and who doesn't, who is accepted by Christ and who isn't, who is in the city of God and who isn't. You hear the word of God and do it. Obedience. That's the family resemblance. Obedience to the word of God. And it's amazing....the statement Jesus is making. Jesus is declaring here His allegiance. He's devoted; He's loyal to His family; to His mother, to His brothers. But who is that? And He points to the disciples and says, "*these who hear the word of God and do it.*" His allegiance is to those whose allegiance is to His Father's Word.

So what kind of hearer are you? A forgetful hearer? Are you an effectual doer? That determines your family identity. So listen to the word of God like your relationship with Christ, your acceptance with Christ, your belonging to the family of God depends on what you do with what you hear. These are the things that matter. So, now you see why I read that quote at the beginning. Hearing is the provision God has made for your soul's eternal well-being. According to our hearing, so shall the state of our souls be to eternity. Take heed how you listen.

Now.....let me close with this quote from Spurgeon:

We are told men ought not to preach without preparation. Granted. But we add, men ought not to hear without preparation. Which, do you think needs the most preparation, the sower or the ground? I would have the sower come with clean hands, but I would have the ground well-plowed and harrowed, well-turned over, and the clods broken before the seed comes in. It seems to me that there is more preparation needed by the ground than by the sower, more by the hearer than by the preacher. (EL, 34)

I spent 15 hours preparing to preach. How many hours did you spend preparing?

What are some things you can do to prepare? Let me just tell you a few things.

1. Read the passage ahead of time. You know we're going to be coming to a certain passage....read it, think about it. Be in the word all week long for that matter.
2. Pray - for me as I prepare throughout the week. Pray for me as I preach and pray for you as you listen. Someone said when it comes to a church's pulpit ministry, most congregations get what they pray for. Pray.
3. Sunday morning starts on Saturday night. Get a good night sleep; get things organized, prepared, ready the night before so that you're not racing around the house on Sunday morning trying to find two socks that match
4. Maybe get up earlier so you aren't as rushed. Eat something before you come. It's hard to hear anything over a stomach that's growling.
5. And of course, as we always like to say here, sit closer to the front and avoid some of the other distractions.

But you know the bottom line is...."If I must give an account for every sermon I preach, isn't it reasonable that you must give an account for every sermon you hear? Wow! Take heed then how you hear. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for this church. I mean this is a church full of people who really listen, who really are eager to hear, they long for the pure milk of the word, like a baby nursing, they're quick to hear and I thank you for that. I know that is the cultivation of your spirit, your grace in our hearts and I just pray that that would continue and we wouldn't take for granted the privilege, the opportunity we have, that we would make the most of it. That there would be fruit that is born in each of us. And, I know there are some who sit here, that hear, but don't hear. I pray that your Spirit would convict them and drive home the importance of this to them.

We thank you for your Word, thank you for the seed that gets sown and how it produces change and fruit in our lives. All the glory goes to you for that. We praise you, we thank you for the time together this morning. We pray that we would be good hearers that we would be good listeners...even as we study the Bible and read scripture on our own. That our ears would really be tuned in to the frequency that you're speaking on....and that we would hear you and respond in a way that honors you and brings glory to Christ. We pray this in His name, Amen.