

“Be Careful How You Listen”

January 5, 2020

Luke 8:16-21

I. Introduction

For the last month or so it has been nice celebrating the various holidays and getting together with family and friends but isn't nice too to think about getting back to a normal routine. We've celebrated Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's but now it is time to pick up where we left off—before all this began—both at home and at work or school and here at Tabernacle.

It's been a while but the last time we were in Luke, we looked at [Luke 8:1-15](#) and Jesus' Parable of the Sower and its interpretation. Jesus illustrated four different soils or responses to hearing God's Word and the Gospel. Today's Scripture brings that teaching to a close—“*Be Careful How You Listen.*” The kind of listeners people are reveals their spiritual condition. Many make a superficial response to the Gospel and the call to make Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior. They “hear” but go no further. Such people are like the husband who hears his wife's request to do something. But he is so preoccupied with a football game or reading the paper or the internet that although he says, “*Yes, dear,*” he never moves a muscle to comply. There are others who hear Jesus' words, but fail to keep them. When troubles and persecution come, since they have no spiritual foundation, they are swept away—just like a house built on the sand with no foundation. They are like the person who begins to clean up after opening Christmas presents but finds an interesting book and stops to read it. An hour later they are still reading the book, and nothing has been picked up. They have forgotten their original task. Finally, there are those who hear Christ's words and obey them and become His true disciples.

To those who truly hear and understand the Parable of the Sower, to His true disciples, Jesus said that there are four reasons to listen carefully to all of His words. The first reason to listen carefully is *to be able to share the message/the Gospel with others.*

II. Reasons to listen carefully

A. To be able to share the message with others Obviously, the purpose of a lamp is to give light; Jesus said, “No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or under a bed.” True disciples do not hide the truth of the Gospel. Instead, they listen to understand God’s word so that they can share the message with others. In [1 Peter 2:9](#) Peter wrote, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” In the Sermon on the Mount in [Matthew 5:14](#), Jesus said that true believers “are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.” True disciples will proclaim God’s Word.

The Great Commission tells all of Jesus’ followers—all Christians, not just the pastor and leaders of the church, to go and make more disciples. It is a serious thing to hear and understand the Word of God, because this puts on us the obligation to share that Word with others. Everyone who receives the seed then becomes a sower, a light-bearer, and a transmitter of God’s truth. [Turn to 1 Thessalonians 1:4-8.](#) They were sharing God’s word. Genuine disciples can’t not share the Gospel with others. We must listen carefully so that we understand and then are able to share the message of salvation with others.

B. To be authentic A 2nd reason to listen carefully is, as Paul wrote in [Romans 12:2](#), to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind,” i.e., to be authentic or real—not a hypocrite. The 2nd reason to listen carefully is *to be authentic*. Jesus repeated [verse 17](#) in [Luke 12](#)—[turn to Luke 12:1-2.](#) Jesus warned His disciples to “be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” In [Matthew 23:3](#) Jesus cautioned His followers to avoid imitating the Pharisees who “do not practice what they preach.” Speaking to the Pharisees in [Matthew 23:28](#) Jesus said, “on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”

One isn't just listen to God's Word and even study it in great detail; he is to go further. A true disciple must apply God's Word to his or her life. Being a Christian is more than having "head knowledge." A person's life must be changed—transformed—becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. Jesus is warning His disciples to examine themselves and their lives to see how they are living—are they genuine disciples? They may be able to fool some people, but given enough time, the truth will come out for all to see. "For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed," or to put it another way, there is "nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open."

C. To be fruitful Jesus then warned all those gathered around Him, "Consider carefully how you listen." Whoever is a true disciple and has eternal life, to him "will be given more," i.e., there is more to come. In the Parable of the Sower the good soil is marked by differing amounts of return—[Matthew 13:23](#) says, "He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." Jesus told His disciples gathered in the upper room in [John 15:8](#), "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." A true disciple will bear fruit—the 3rd reason to listen carefully is *to be fruitful*. Fruit isn't limited to winning others to Christ, it includes the fruit of the Spirit found in [Galatians 5:22-23](#): "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." As [James 1:27](#) says it is also "to look after orphans and widows in their distress." As a Christian grows in his or her walk in Christ, all these fruits will be seen in his or her life. As a Christian grows, fruit will be seen.

Jesus also warned the false disciples that "whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them." In the end, the false disciples lose everything. All their self-righteous works that they had counted on to bring them salvation will turn out to be nothing; [Isaiah 64:6](#) calls such "righteous acts" "filthy rags;" [Philippians 3:8](#) calls them "rubbish." Like the wicked, lazy, unfaithful servant in the Parable of the Talents in [Matthew 25:14-30](#), they will be thrown "outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" ([Matthew 25:30](#)).

D. To do God's will The arrival of His family gave Jesus the perfect opportunity to illustrate the 4th reason to listen carefully: *To do God's will*. Since His stepfather, Joseph, wasn't mentioned it is assumed that by this time Joseph is dead. Now Jesus' immediate family consisted of His mother, His half-brothers (James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas) and His half-sisters who are not named (Matthew 13:55-56). We are told in Acts 1:14 that after His resurrection, they would believe in Him but until then John 7:5 says that "even his own brothers did not believe in him." Mark's account in Mark 3:20-21 implies that they were concerned about the large crowds and about the rising hostility of the Jewish leaders. So, having decided that "He is out of his mind," Mary and Jesus' half-brothers had come to rescue Him.

But Jesus wasn't renouncing His family. He loved them very much. John 19:25-27 shows that His last request on the cross was for the Apostle John to take care of His mother. Jesus was teaching that being a member of Jesus' earthly family didn't give any one of them salvation. Like everyone else they needed to be saved from their sin. Without a personal faith in Jesus, they were no more spiritually related to Him than anyone else. Jesus said that the only way to be spiritually related to Him was to do the will of His Father. John 6:29 says that "The work of God, i.e. what God wants—the will of the Father, is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

The Lord's purpose in referring to His disciples as His mother and brothers was to teach that those who have a relationship with Him are the ones who "hear God's word and put it into practice;" i.e., they do God's will. Jesus made the same point again later in the Gospel of Luke—turn to Luke 11:27-28. Human relationships are not the issue, being part of His spiritual family is much more important than any human relationship and is based on obedience to the Word of God. It isn't enough to "hear God's word;" we must "put it into practice." The 4th reason to listen carefully is *to do God's will*.

James, the brother of Jesus, made the same point—turn to James 1:22-25. It's easy for a person to think he is are “*spiritual*” because he attends church regularly, listens to one preacher after another, take notes, and even marks his Bible. But if he never practices what he learns, such a person is only fooling himself. He isn't spiritual at all. He must listen carefully so that he can do God's will.

III. Conclusion

Being a Christian is more than just hearing God's Word. For that matter, Jesus said in Mark 4:24, “Consider carefully *what you hear.*” We must watch what we hear and how we hear or listen. Listening to the wrong things or listening to the right things with the wrong attitude will rob us of truth and blessing. In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter told all Christians, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” We need to listen to understand and retain God's Word so that we can share it with others. We need to listen and apply God's Word to our lives so that we walk the talk—we are authentic, real Christians; not hypocrites. We must listen and allow God's Word to fill us so that we will bear fruit that brings praise to God—1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” We need to listen intently so that we can be obedient to God's will—so that God's will “will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). If we are careful to listen to the Word and then share it with others and also allow it to change us, God will give us more; but if we fail to let our light shine, we will lose what we have.

As we begin a new year, I would challenge you to be careful how you listen and apply what you hear. Don't listen to your doubts; don't listen to your cares; don't listen to the minimizers and detractors; listen to the Holy Spirit. Allow the Holy Spirit to fill you and use you and grow you so that next year at this time you can look back and see how you have grown as a child of God. Remember that “(I) you can do all this through him who gives (me) you strength” (Philippians 4:13).

