

Hearing the Truth

Introduction

- A. Text: Lk. 8:18.
- B. If the gospel has a prerequisite, it is humility — we must be humble enough to hear what the gospel says to us. (The process can go no further if there is anything that filters the gospel out of our thinking.)
- C. Like any message, the gospel of Christ requires a fair hearing.
 - 1. We must be humble, open, willing to be persuaded — the gospel won't have a chance if we don't give it a chance.
 - 2. No amount of evidence will be enough if we are simply "unpersuadable."
 - 3. There are none so deaf as those who will not hear. Cf. Mt. 13:13-15; Jn. 5:40; Ac. 7:57; etc.
 - 4. In Jas. 3:17, one of the qualities of wisdom is that it is "easy to be entreated" (KJV) or "open to reason" (ESV).
- D. All the people who heard Jesus heard the same words, but there were many different responses. Cf. Mt. 7:24-27.
- E. Simple "hearing" is not enough — the question is, how will we hear and what will we do about it? Cf. Hb. 4:2.
- F. We are all prone to the problems of denial and defensiveness. (Rather than "hear," we tend to "hide" - Gen. 3:8-10.)
- G. So Jesus said, "Take heed how you hear" (Lk. 8:18). Let's think first about the message that must be heard.

The Gospel Story

- A. The gospel is the message of the cross — it's about "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).
- B. The gospel is the story of God saving us from the eternal consequences of our rebellion against Him.
 - 1. When mankind rebelled against God, God was not willing to leave us in our lost condition.
 - 2. He sent His Son into the world to live a perfect human life, and then die, taking our punishment upon Himself.
 - 3. Raised from the dead after His crucifixion, Jesus now reigns at the right hand of God and offers forgiveness and salvation to all who will obey His gospel.
 - 4. When the time is right, He is going to come back, destroy this world, and take His forgiven people to heaven to be with Him forever.
- C. Four passages that point to the heart of the gospel.
 - 1. Mt. 20:17-19.
 - 2. Jn. 3:16-18.

3. Lk. 24:46-49.
 4. 1 Cor. 15:1-8.
- D. The gospel story has an invitation attached to it — but it is a two-fold invitation.
1. Accept forgiveness — “Repent . . . be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Ac. 2:38).
 2. Become disciples — “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me” (Mt. 11:28-30).
- E. Hearing this message requires being open to all the truth we need to hear.

Life’s Most Important Issue

- A. The gospel challenges us to deal seriously with whether there really is a God.
1. Truth . . . Is the gospel of Jesus Christ true? (Honesty — truth is not always what we want it to be.)
 2. Response . . . What am I going to do about it? (Courage — truth is not always easy to respond to.)
- B. There is no in-between, no safe middle ground: if the gospel is true, we should devote our lives to it — but if it is not true, such a lie needs to be eradicated from the earth.
- C. Well might Jesus have said, “Take heed how you hear” (Lk. 8:18).

Two Truths, Both Hard to Accept

- A. The gospel confronts us with two truths.
1. The sinful truth about ourselves (the gospel’s diagnosis of our malady) — the problem.
 2. The saving truth about God (the gospel’s plan for our redemption) — the solution.
- B. From the beginning, the first has always been the hardest to accept — we all struggle with defensiveness and anger.
1. Adam and Eve - Gen. 3:8-10.
 2. Cain - Gen. 4:4-8.
- C. If we’re not prepared to hear the gospel penitently, we should go back home - Mt. 3:7,8.
- D. Consider the story of David and Nathan - 2 Sam. 12:1-14. All of us face the same decision: how will we hear what God says about our sins?
1. Nathan: “You are the man” (v.7).
 2. David: “I have sinned against the Lord” (v.13).

Conclusion

- A. How receptive are you? Honest? Courageous?
 - 1. We must not define truth in terms of what we want it to be.
 - 2. Truth is what it is, regardless of our preferences. “Truth is not always what we want to hear” (Jewish Proverb).
 - 3. The more painful a truth may be to accept, the more we must be willing to go wherever truth leads us.
- B. Without honesty and courage, hearing the truth is worse than useless — it will, in fact, condemn us. Cf. Jn. 12:48.
- C. How have you “heard” the gospel up to now? In what manner have you listened to what God has said to you?
 - 1. What is your track record?
 - 2. What have you done when you’ve had to deal with uncomfortable truth?
 - 3. How have you reacted when you’ve been told something you didn’t want to hear?
 - 4. Are there any limits on how far you would go to follow Jesus?
- D. We alone can determine what kind of hearers we are going to be — and our salvation depends on our decision.