

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Be Careful How You Listen

Scripture: Luke 8:16-21

Code: 42-106

I'd like you to take your Bible and open to the eighth chapter of Luke. This morning we come to an interesting little section from verses 16 through 21. It's actually two little sections that I've combined for one message, Luke chapter 8 verses 16 to 21. Let me read this text to you so that you have it in mind.

Beginning in verse 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 lampstand in order that those who come in may see the light. For nothing is hidden that shall not become evident, or anything secret that shall not be known and come to light. 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. And His mothers and brothers came to Him and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. It was reported to Him, 'Your mother and your brothers are standing outside wishing to see You.' But He answered and said to them, 'My mother and my brothers are these who hear the Word of God and do it.'"

Now the beginning point of our message this morning is in verse 18, the opening statement, "Therefore take care how you listen." This is a warning from our Lord that we've turned into the title of the message, "Be careful how you listen."

When I was a little school boy, it was common for my teachers to send notes home informing my parents of my behavior. There were a number of constants in the information that came to my parents, one of them was this, "Johnny talks too much and doesn't listen." Since they didn't have any clinical initials to attach to my condition, there was no ADD or ADHD, and there was no Ritalin to sedate me, so they just said I was disobedient and they punished me with the instruction that listening would be less painful. And so I learned to listen.

Frankly, good listeners make good company. Good listeners make good friends. Good listeners make good learners. And good listeners then make good teachers. Good listeners make good counselors. On the other hand, poor listeners who only want to hear themselves talk and even while forced to listen are only planning what they're going to say as soon as you take a breath are usually cheated out of the best relationships in life. Just from a human standpoint, learning how to listen is important. It determines an awful lot about our relationships to others. Far more important, however, than how we listen to others is how we listen to the Lord. How good are we at listening to God? What kind of listeners are we? If we're to beware about how we listen, if we're to take care about how

we listen as Jesus said, then how are we to understand the kind of listening that the Lord would have us to exercise?

Well, by the way, this is a constant theme in Scripture. It's not something that's only here, although I don't know if you've ever heard a message on it or ever thought about it in that regard, but one of the ringing themes all through the Bible is that we are commanded to listen appropriately. Obviously we don't have the time to cover that extensively because it is such a recurring theme in Scripture, but we can sort of cover it representatively. For example, the command, "Hear the Word of the Lord," is about 35 times given in the Old Testament. The command, "Hear, O Israel," appears about a half a dozen times in the Old Testament. Numerous times God says, "Listen to Me," you find that command in the Psalms, you find it in Job, you'd find it in Isaiah, you'll find it in Jeremiah and other places. And several times in the Scripture the phrase, "Today, hear His voice," appears; Psalm 95; Hebrews chapter 3; Hebrews chapter 4. So repeatedly, and those are just representative, not exhaustive, repeatedly throughout the Scripture we are told to listen. In fact, Jesus Himself just made a statement in that regard back in verse 8 of this chapter, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." And that statement Jesus repeated numerous times. We are warned frequently then in Scripture to listen when God speaks. In fact, one day at the Transfiguration of Jesus when the Lord was with Peter, James and John on the mountain, the voice of the Father came out of heaven directly and audibly and God said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, listen to Him." That is recorded in Matthew's account of the Transfiguration, Mark's and Luke's as well. When God speaks, listen. Deuteronomy 4:36, "Out of heaven God let you hear His voice that He might instruct you." What a privilege. God has allowed us to hear Him speak out of heaven through Scripture. How good are we at listening? What kind of listener are you? You come occasionally or regularly and you hear the Word of God being proclaimed, what kind of listener are you?

Our text covers that subject. While as I noted for you, verse 18 sort of sets the theme in place, "Take care how you listen." The verses around that fill in the way we are to listen. Now the subject of hearing is important in this context. As I noted for you back in verse 8, Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Those of you who can listen rightly, listen because I'm going to explain to you a parable and, interestingly enough, it's a parable about how you hear. You remember, we just covered the parable of the soils last time? Go back to that parable for a minute, look at verse 12. "The seed beside the road," verse 12, "are those who have heard." Verse 13, "Those on the rocky soil are those who when they hear." Verse 14, "And the seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard." And verse 15, "The seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the Word in an honest and a good heart." The whole parable has been a story about how people hear. Some hear very superficially, like hard ground. Some hear very emotionally, psychologically, like the rocky soil. Some hear very temporarily, like the weedy soil and become distracted by other interests. Some hear in a good and honest heart and they hear savingly and the Word takes root and produces a hundred-fold. On that parable then comes this statement, "Be careful how you hear." Don't hear superficially. Don't hear emotionally, self-centeredly. Don't hear in a worldly fashion. Hear in a good

and honest heart that responds appropriately to what the Word of God has to say. So this is the major premise of the text and it's built on the parable of the soils. Take care how you listen.

The kind of listener you are, the kind of hearer you are will tell you your spiritual condition. That's right, that's what we're going to learn this morning. The kind of hearer you are will tell you your spiritual condition. Now we've been saying this and it's going to come up all through the teaching of Jesus as it does in the rest of the New Testament, there are many people who make a superficial response to Jesus and to the gospel. There are many who will say, "Lord, Lord, we did this, we did that in Your name." To whom He says, "Depart from Me, I never knew you." There are many superficial false disciples. And so the question keeps coming up, how do I know if I'm the real thing? How do I make a true assessment of my condition spiritually before God? And in this passage we learn that you can make that assessment by discerning what kind of hearer you are, what kind of listener. That will reveal to you whether you're the good soil or not. Many, as I said, profess to believe in Jesus Christ, they had an incident somewhere, prayed a prayer at some point in the past but how they listen proves whether they are really saved. The theme again takes us back to the soils, superficial hearers, emotional hearers, worldly hearers as opposed to good and honest hearers. It's all about hearing.

So Jesus told the parable and then, you remember, back in verses 9 and 10, His disciples came to Him, followers, not only the Apostles but other disciples. And they asked Him what the parable meant. And then He said, verse 10, "To you it's been granted to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables in order that seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand." So Jesus said, "You came, you asked for an explanation, I'm going to give you an explanation because you came, you affirm your discipleship, you affirm your interest and I'm going to tell you what you need to know. The rest, they're not going to understand and I'm going to continue to speak in parables as He did for the rest of His Galilean ministry, both to illustrate what He would explain to the disciples and to hide the truth from those who were fixed in their rejection of Him. We told you a couple of weeks ago that that was an act of judgment on His part. They wouldn't hear, they wouldn't hear, they wouldn't hear and so now Jesus pronounces a judgment, sentence on them, and says, "You can't hear. You will see without seeing, you will hear without understanding."

So the disciples have pulled around Him then. And He's going to speak to them and it is to them He is speaking in verse 16. It is to them that He says, "Be careful how you hear." You have identified yourselves as disciples, you have come near, you want to know the truth and I'm going to tell you that that's good, that's a start but that doesn't make the final reality clear. It's how you hear that's critical to discerning your spiritual condition. We know from John 6 that there were many disciples of Jesus who walked no more with Him, who walked away after following Jesus, many. We also know there was a Judas among the Apostles who never did hear the way He should have heard the glories of the gospel. So even though they are disciples, in fact it is to disciples, those who profess to follow Jesus, those who profess to be interested in His truth, it is to them that He says, "Here is some...here are

some tests by which you can validate your spiritual condition. How do you listen?"

That's so important for us. That's what you do when you come here, when you go to a fellowship group, when you hear somebody else preach or teach the Word of God, you listen. But the question is, how do you listen? There are four ways in which the good soil listens, four ways in which a true hearer hears. And I'm going to give you those four ways. I'll give them to you now and then we'll unfold them. First of all, evangelistically...evangelistically; secondly, authentically; thirdly, fruitfully; and finally, obediently...evangelistically, authentically, fruitfully and obediently. And that's all in this little text, as we will see. And that's very much in contrast. The people who don't hear the way they should hear, don't respond evangelistically. They don't respond authentically. They don't respond fruitfully. They don't respond obediently. So you can look at your life and you can know whether you're hearing the way you should hear.

First of all, let's look at the fact that true hearers, good and honest soil properly plowed by conviction and repentance and a proper understanding of the gospel and the embracing of that, the true soil hears God's Word evangelistically. Now if you're looking for that word in verse 16, you're not going to find it, but that's where the point is made. And here comes Jesus with another parable, it's a very simple little parable, a little story. It is, no pun intended, very enlightening.

"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 in order that those who come in may see the light."

This is a...this is an absurdity. Jesus here is giving a story that anybody could understand, anybody could identify. It's absolutely as simple and straightforward as it can be. It is a...by the way, it is an analogy or a parable that Jesus apparently liked to use because it makes the point so well. He used it in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:15. He used it later in Luke, chapter 11 verse 33, "No one after lighting a lamp puts it away in a cellar, nor under a peck measure, or a basket, but on the lampstand in order that those who enter may see the light." It's just a...it's self-evident truth, it's what we call an axiom because it's self-evident. Nobody lights a lamp to put it out. You light a lamp to give light.

And by the way, just a little bit of background. Most archeology digs around the world will surface lamps. All societies had to use some kind of fire to produce light and generally speaking they used oil and a wick and lit that to provide light in the homes. And that's exactly what we find in the archeology digs of the land of Israel, terra cotta lamps. They were like a little flat pitcher, a saucer type, maybe kind of covered over a little bit on the top with either a wick floating in them or inserted through a hole so that the smoke could ascend. They were often very open. There was a handle so they could be moved around and they were put on lampstands, some kind of table just like you put a table in your house on a lamp table to elevate the light because you don't want it on the ground. They did the same thing. Sometimes it would be a shelf on the wall, wherever. The idea was light the lamp and put it up

high so it can give light to the house and everybody that's there.

Nobody put a skeuos, a vessel, a container over the top of a lamp because what does that do? It extinguishes the lamp. You don't light the lamp to extinguish the lamp. And no one, this is kind of interesting, would put it under a bed. And you might think, "Yeah, you put it under a bed and you burn up the whole house because it will catch the mattress on fire." Yeah, well that's because you and I live in a world of mattresses and beds that are elevated off the floor. They didn't...a bed was a rolled up pallet, just literally a blanket rolled up. Now we all know that a blanket will put out a fire. In fact, if you have a fire in your house, you perhaps have thrown a blanket over it to extinguish the fire because it cuts off the oxygen. You wouldn't take your thick mat that you sleep on and put it on top of the lamp. You wouldn't put a container on it to extinguish it because you lit it in order that it might give light.

That's the simple story that Jesus tells. Everybody would understand that. The question is, what is He talking about? Well what He's talking about is equally simple. What does hiding the light of the lamp illustrate? Hiding the light of God, the gospel from those around us. Nobody who lights the light would then extinguish it. You light it that others may see. Nobody in whom God has lit the light is going to want to conceal it and cover it, they're going to want to light everybody around them. That's why I say, true Christians listen evangelistically. They hear with a view to proclaim. They hear with a view to tell others. We know this when one of the great evidences of a person's conversion is that immediate passion to tell everybody they know what has happened in their life. These disciples had heard the truth. The lamp, as it were, had been lit and Jesus is now saying, you're going to spread it, aren't you? You're going to let everybody see it, because if you're a real disciple, if you're a good and honest heart, if you're good soil, if you're a true follower of Me, you're going to respond to the truth evangelistically. You're going to take it in and the immediate response is going to be that you want to take every opportunity God provides to give it back out. False disciples are content to extinguish it. In fact, they're not likely to care about witnessing, about evangelizing, about communicating the gospel to someone. They might even be embarrassed about it. They might even be reticent to do that. They might not even want anybody outside the church to know that they're a Christian so that they're not cut off from participating the worldly activities which they still hanker for. They weren't given the truth to hide it. And their desire to let it shine is evidence that the mighty work of God has really been done in their hearts.

Now, this is, in some sense, obvious that the light was lit to shine. But I think there's something in Jesus' mind and that takes us back to what He said in verse 10 of this chapter. He did say, "To you it's been granted to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand." Jesus had just told them, "I'm speaking in parables so you will understand, but I'm also speaking in parables so they won't." And I told you that Jesus is making a judgment. He's rendering a verdict on those who have fixed themselves in unbelief. They didn't listen, they wouldn't listen, they wouldn't listen and then they

couldn't listen because He didn't tell them what these things meant. That was a judicial act on the part of the Son of God to render judgment on those obstinate unbelieving Jews.

So maybe the disciples might think that they were to do the same thing. They might think that they also were to make those kinds of judgments and not take the truth to everyone. Maybe they should do like the Lord did and even though the light was lit, put it out so others can't see it. Jesus, wanting to make sure that misunderstanding doesn't exist in their mind, says, "No, the light was lit in you to be kept burning." And you can understand that. We are told this is the great commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, we don't make judgments about who can hear and who can't. We're not in the position of that judgment. That's for God to do, that's why in Matthew 7 Jesus said, "Judge not lest you be judged." You can know them by their fruits, you can inspect people's lives, you can render a verdict on the viability of their testimony, but you can't render a divine verdict on their spiritual condition, whether or not it is a permanent condition. That's not for you to do. Only Jesus could do that. So He's saying to the disciples, "It's not for you to put the light out, only I can make that determination, it's for you to let it shine, to proclaim it to everybody."

If He wants to make a judgment on Israel, that's His prerogative. That's not yours to make a judgment on somebody. You take the gospel everywhere. You let that light shine. Matthew 5:14, Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. You are like a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden. So let your light shine so that men may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The light of the gospel, let it shine, not only through what you are, that is the way you live, but through what you proclaim, that is the gospel.

There was only one occasion after this when Jesus actually commanded the disciples to be silent and that was the command that He gave to Peter, James and John not to speak about what they saw on the Mount of Transfiguration until after His resurrection. I believe that Jesus wanted to make the announcement Himself about His great glory which He did as recorded in Luke chapter 22 verses 67 to 69. But apart from saying don't speak about what you saw in the transfiguration until after My resurrection, they were to proclaim everything else about Jesus. And in chapter 9 verse 1, in particular, the Twelve were called together, given power and authority over all the demons, to heal diseases and He sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and perform healing. And down in verse 6, "Departing they began going about among the villages preaching the gospel." So very soon after this, they began to do exactly what the Lord indicated in this parable, let the light shine.

Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 10:27. And here He's talking again to His disciples. "What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light. What you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops." Now that makes the point. Jesus said I may be pulling you aside, and I may be telling you things in secret, and I may be whispering in your ear because I've rendered a judgment against the unbelieving obstinate Israelites. But what I'm telling you in secret, you proclaim from the housetops. You can't make that judgment. That's for Me to do.

The principle here then is this, true hearers hear evangelistically. What they hear, they proclaim. They have the light and they don't conceal it, they don't put it under anything. Faithful witness then to the gospel is a proof of true discipleship. In fact, Peter wrote this, 1 Peter 2:9, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." In other words, you all are a people for the purpose of proclaiming the excellencies of the light. So you proclaim it, and verse 12, you keep your behavior honest among the Gentiles so that as they observe you they will glorify God in the day of visitation. That's basic to our Christian experience. Philippians chapter 2 also, very important statement, verses 15 and 16, "That you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent children of God..." How do you prove you're a child of God? "You appear as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of life," Paul says. And if you appear as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of life, you prove that you are children of God, and then Paul adds at the end, and you will also vindicate Me so that I have not labored in vain. The words that I have spoken to you, Jesus said in John 6:63, they are Spirit and they are life. You take those words and you speak them.

John the Apostle was obedient to that, wasn't he? When John proclaimed at the beginning of his first epistle, "What was from the beginning, what we heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld in our hands handled concerning the Word of life, the life was manifested, we've seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. What we have seen and heard, we proclaim to you." That's exactly what Jesus was telling them to do. What you saw, what you heard in Me, you tell. He was the light. They received the light and they were to let the light shine.

That was really the Apostle Paul's great commission when he was stopped in his tracks by the Lord. The Lord said to him, according to his own testimony in Acts 26, that He had called him to open their eyes, both Jewish and Gentiles, to open their eyes so that they may turn to darkness to light. Receive the forgiveness of sin. So a mark of a true hearer, a true Christian is this passion for proclamation, faithful gospel witness identifies a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

First mark, he hears evangelistically. Second mark, he hears authentically...authentically. And this brings it right down to you as an individual. Look at verse 17 of Luke 8. It's as if the Lord says, "Now while we're talking about lamps and light, let me say this. "For nothing is hidden that shall not become evident, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light." Admittedly there are some options offered by commentators as to precisely what this means and what the Lord intends to say in this context. But it seems reasonable to me to assume that what the Lord is talking about here is what's on the inside. He's talking about your authenticity. When He says, "For nothing is hidden that shall not become evident," the assumption is you're hiding something. But it's not going to work because it's going to be made evident. Matthew 10:26 again, a moment ago we read 10:27, but back in that very same passage in Matthew 10:26, "Therefore do not fear them," that is your enemies, "for

there is nothing covered that will not be revealed and hidden that will not be known." The whole idea is that there is a difference between how people conduct themselves on the outside and what's going on in the heart. And in the end, you can't hide it. You can't hide it.

He says it a second way in verse 17. "Nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light." It's as if Jesus said, "Look, while I'm talking about light, let me remind you, not only are you to be marked as one who lets the light shine, but know this, the light of God is going to shine on your heart to reveal its true condition." In other words, you don't want to be a hypocrite in doing this. This is a principle you find even in the Old Testament, the end of the book of Ecclesiastes, the last verse, "For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden whether it's good or evil."

But what is Jesus saying here? He's talking about hypocrisy. How do I know that? Turn over to Luke 12. Luke 12, the opening three verses shows how Jesus uses this statement. He uses it again here, another one of the statements that He liked to use in different contexts. There were so many thousands of people in this crowd that it says in verse 1 they were stepping on one another. "And He began saying to His disciples, 'First...you know now He's only saying things to His disciples in terms of explanation, the crowds are hearing parables they don't understand, but to the disciples He says...Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees...which is what? Hypocrisy...Beware of hypocrisy.'" He warned those who followed Him repeatedly, don't be hypocrites, don't be like those who follow for a while and then fall away. Don't be like those who say, "Lord, Lord," but they're not real. Don't be like those in the words of Matthew 7 in His Sermon on the Mount who build their house, their religious house but they build it on sand. Beware of being a phony because...verse 2, "There is nothing covered up that will not be revealed and hidden that will not be known. And accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner room shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." Wow! The truth about you is going to become clear in the judgment. And so by the usage of that statement in Luke 12, we understand its meaning back in Luke 8. Jesus says, "Nothing is hidden that shall not become evident, nothing secret that shall not be known and come to light."

What He's saying is this, as you look at yourself as a disciple, as one who professes Christ, as one who says he's a follower, as one who sort of stepped out of the crowd and come to learn from Jesus, examine yourself. Are you hearing evangelistically? And are you hearing authentically? As you look at your heart are you the real thing? Are the things that you're hearing the most important things to you? That's the issue. Are they the real treasures? Is it the truth that thrills your heart? That excites your soul? Is that really you down on the inside.

Thirdly, true listeners hear evangelistically, authentically and fruitfully...fruitfully. You look at your life, you ask the first question, "Do I have a consuming desire to spread the truth of God to others? Am I compelled to the wonders and the glories of the gospel so that they are the purest and richest possessions that I have? And that indicates the authentic love of my heart and not just something

superficial?

Thirdly, am I hearing fruitfully? Verse 18, we're back to the statement that is really the thesis of the passage, "Take care how you listen...and then this...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." This is another very, very simple statement which, by the way, Jesus used on a number of occasions. Whoever has...who's that? Well, whoever has eternal life, whoever genuinely has salvation, whoever is in the Kingdom, whoever is good soil in whom the seed has found its life and fruitfulness. "Whoever has, to him shall more be given." How can you tell who has salvation? Because there is for that person more...more. There are some people who think that you can be a Christian, believe at some moment in your life, and that's all that's required. And if you never obey and if you never are blessed and if you never are fruitful, it doesn't matter. But it does matter because if you're for real, you will have salvation and much more. In the parable, Jesus said that good soil produced a hundredfold, that's ten times what anybody would expect in any kind of harvest. It's what Jesus meant when He said in John 10:10 that He would give life and give it more...what?...abundantly. In the parables of Matthew 13 Jesus gave the parable about the soils and just after that He said this same thing, "Whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever doesn't have, even what he has shall be taken away from him." So that statement of Jesus is woven right into the same parable back in Matthew 13. It fits that situation. If you have the good seed in good soil, you'll not just have that, you'll have a hundredfold that.

John 1:16, if you're a true believer, John writes, "Of His fullness we have all received and grace upon grace." It's not just grace at salvation, it's grace upon grace upon grace upon...how do you know when somebody is real? How do you know when somebody is a true believer? Because their life is filled with blessing...grace upon grace upon grace, fruit multiplied. Ephesians 1 verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." We are blessed with every or all spiritual blessings. He goes on to talk about all these amazing blessings lavished on us, the riches of His grace, in all wisdom and insight. He's given us an inheritance and we're sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise who is the pledge of our inheritance. And He talks about all that is ours from the riches of His grace...grace upon grace upon grace upon grace. You begin to experience the one who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think, according to His power working in us. We are created unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. We see the fruit of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. We see the fruits of righteousness, Philippians 1:11. So you look at somebody's life and like Jesus said in John...or in Matthew 7:16, "By their fruits you shall know them." Look at your life. Do you see blessing upon blessing, grace upon grace upon grace? Is there a hundredfold there? Or sixty-fold? Or thirty-fold?

In Matthew chapter 25 there's another very good way to illustrate this. In Matthew 25 Jesus told a story, a parable, about talents. Remember that? And from verse 14 on there were certain talents

that were given, five talents to one servant, two to another. And you know the story. Down in verse 29, and I just want to point to this, there's a principle. It says this, "To everyone who has," and that's gospel opportunity, really. Whoever's been given the gospel...to the one who has it and really receives it, more shall be given. He shall have an abundance. "But from the one who doesn't have, even what he does have will be taken away." What does that mean? "Cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness, in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." You go to hell naked, that's what it means. So if you have salvation, you get grace upon grace upon grace upon grace in time and throughout all eternity.

The last half of the verse, "Whoever does not have," that is whoever doesn't hear the way you should hear, believingly, savingly, genuinely, "even what he thinks he has," whether it's religion or works or some kind of nobility or acceptance in life, or whatever it is he thinks he's been successful at, "it's all going to be taken away from him." In the end, the false disciple, the unsaved person loses absolutely everything. That's why Paul said, "My Jewishness, my being zealous for the Law, my being circumcised the eighth day, my being this, my being that," Philippians 3, "is all dung, it's waste." What happens to the person who doesn't have? What you think you have, you lose and you go into a place of judgment and what you will have is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

So, you look at your life. What do you see? Do you hear the glories of the gospel evangelistically, longing to proclaim the saving truth of Christ to others? Do you hear the glories of the gospel authentically, knowing that they're the most precious treasures you have, the truest expressions of your heart's joy? Do you hear the glories of the gospel fruitfully, seeing the results of the divine grace of God being poured out in your life...grace upon grace upon grace...evidenced to you by the flood of blessings?

Finally, the true hearer hears obediently...obediently. And we can see this briefly in the little incident in verses 19 to 21. It's an interesting incident, it's also recorded by Matthew, but Matthew records it in the twelfth chapter, verses 46 to 50. Mark records it also in Mark 3:31 to 35. Both Matthew and Mark locate this event at a later time in Jesus' life...not much later but a little later. They located after the attack on Jesus by the Jewish leaders who accused Him of being empowered by Satan. Luke has that event in chapter 11 verses 14 to 28. But Luke imports this incident which probably happened in the chronology of Matthew and Mark, Luke imports it back and sticks it in here because it fits what he's talking about. You'll notice in verse 21 it's about those who hear the Word of God again. So he...Luke puts it here because it suits the purpose. Not being confined or limited to a chronological account, he has the freedom under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to bring an incident from a later time, fit it into here because it suits the theme. So I would say that it probably occurred during the sequence that Matthew and Mark identify it but it fits wonderfully well in here because it's about how you hear. And so Luke places it in this context.

Verse 19, let's see what it's about. "His mother," the mother of Jesus, "and brothers came to Him and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd, and it was reported to Him, 'Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside,'" like it was some kind of an insult, I guess, "'wishing to see You.'" Now let me just say a few things about this that are interesting to me.

First of all, why did they come? I mean, this is an adult man, this is Jesus, He's doing what He must do, what are His mother and His family doing there? Well Mark 3:20 and 21 gives us a little input. "He came home, the multitude gathered again to such an extent that they couldn't even eat a meal." Everywhere Jesus went it was a massive crowd...massive. "And when His own people, family, heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him for they were saying He's lost His senses." The family was saying, "You know, you're just getting carried away with this deal, you can't...you've got this massive humanity trailing you everywhere. This is out of control. You've got the religious leaders infuriated. They're saying You do what You do by the power of Beelzebub or Satan. You're putting Yourself in a terrible position. You could lose Your life, hostility is mounting. You can't even cope with life because You're literally trailed by this huge crowd of thousands upon thousands of people." And so it was as if His caring mom and His brothers who were brought along are going to rescue Him from these very difficult circumstances in which He's living. They want to help Him.

It's interesting to notice also, Mary is there and Jesus' brothers which makes it very clear that Mary was not, as the Catholic Church says, "a perpetual virgin. That lie and deception was invented in the second century. And even Roman Catholic historian Fitzmeyer writes in his book, "There's no indication in the New Testament about Mary being always a virgin. This belief in one form or another can be traced to the second century A.D." There are, of course, dilemmas that the Catholic Church has to deal with. Where did these brothers come from? And Mark chapter 6 and verse 3 even names Jesus' brothers. There is James, Joses, Judas, Simon and His sisters were there, too. So they say one of two things, they say this was a whole group of children of Joseph by a prior marriage...which is, of course, ludicrous. Or they say this is cousins, not children. But that's ludicrous as well. Mary and Joseph had a whole family of boys and girls. And here comes Mary with Jesus' half-brothers. He was the firstborn, born before she ever had a relationship with Joseph. God was His Father, but He had half-brothers and sisters. John 7 verse 5 says they didn't believe in Him. They didn't believe in Him. Acts 1:14 says eventually after the resurrection they came to believe in Him.

Mary believed in Him. Mary knew from the start. She also knew she needed to be saved. That's why in her Magnificat in Luke 1:46 to 55 she talks about God, My Savior. She knew that Jesus' name was Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. He knew that God had sent her not only a Son but a Savior. So Mary didn't believe what the Catholic Church believes about Mary. She didn't believe that she was sinless. She didn't believe that she was co-redemptrix with Christ. She was not a perpetual virgin. Joseph, by the way, is not mentioned which indicates probably what we know to be true, he was dead. Died fairly young. He's obviously not around at the crucifixion

because when Jesus is dying on the cross, He commits His mother to the care of John, which is because, obviously, she had no husband to care for her. Jesus is not indifferent to His mother at all, as His statement caring for her on the cross makes very clear. There He is at the end of bearing His sins of the world and He's concerned about His mother. He also was not indifferent to His brothers since later on He redeemed them, as Acts 1:14 states.

But His response here seems on the surface to demonstrate indifference. It only makes a very important point. Here's His answer, verse 21, "He answered and said to them, 'My mother and My brother are these who hear the Word of God and do it.'" The disciples around Me who really have a relationship with Me because now relationships with Me aren't defined in human terms anymore, they're not defined in family terms or physical terms. A relationship to Me is defined as hearing the Word of God which I give and doing it, an obedient hearing.

Is that how you hear? Do you hear the Word of God and do you have this desire and longing to do it? To obey it? Or do you go out of here saying, "I don't know how long I can keep coming and enduring this. I don't want to listen to this." Or do you leave saying, "I'm so glad to hear that because now I know what I need to do to honor the Lord." He was neither indifferent to His mother or His brothers as time would show. But He was not subject to them either. From the age of twelve He said He had to be about His Father's business. They had no right to tell Him what to do at all. And He wanted them to know that. In the eleventh chapter verse 27 of Luke, there was somebody yelling out of the crowd, a common thing people do. Some woman, in fact more than one, they were so happy with Jesus and what He was teaching, they were so enamored with Him, these women raised the voice, one of them, maybe expressing the feelings of others, and she said, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed." Trying to compliment Him. He said...compliment His mother, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and do it." He kept going back to the fact that human relationships aren't the issue here. It's the spiritual relationship, hearing the Word and doing it. James echoes that. "Be not hearers only but doers of the Word." If you're a hearer only, you're self-deceived. You have to be a doer of the Word. That's what our Lord is saying. Matthew 7 He says, "The one who hears My Word and obeys it is like a man who builds his house upon the rock." In John 8, "If you continue in My Word, you're My real disciple." In the fourteenth chapter of John, and the fifteenth chapter of John He says, "If you love Me, you will...do what?...keep My commandments." In 1 John chapter 2 and verse 4, John says, "The one who says I have come to know Him and doesn't keep His commandments is a liar." Pretty clear. "And the truth's not in him." And by the way, John repeats that in chapter 3 and essentially repeats that again in chapter 5 at the beginning of the chapter.

So the picture is clear. The Lord says the people who have a relationship to Me hear the Word of God evangelistically. They hear it authentically. They hear it fruitfully. And they hear it obediently. It's important to preach the Word, that's my responsibility. It's important to do that. It's critically important to hear. You can do an inventory on your own heart, what kind of hearer are you? Be

careful how you listen.

Lord, we thank You for living, teaching, clarifying spiritual truth so that we need not misunderstand. We have gathered here a congregation of professed disciples, would-be disciples who are saying in one sense or another, "I hear what You have to say." But what kind of hearers are they? Help everyone to examine his or her heart to see if the glories of the gospel literally burst forth in shining light to those around us as we long to spread the truth, to see if the glories of the gospel are our most precious treasures, sweeter than honey from the honeycomb, more valuable than gold, to see if the glories of the gospel are filling our lives with blessing upon blessing, grace upon grace upon grace and to see if the glories of the gospel motivate us when we hear to eagerly obey so that we can truly be those who listen, good and honest soil in which the Word finds root and bears fruit. Thank You again for Your instruction, we pray. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).