

Hearing the Word

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of truly hearing Jesus' words and the obstacles that prevent us from experiencing spiritual life.

Scripture: Isaiah 50:1, Luke 7:12, John 6:57-67

Topics: "Hearing God", "Spiritual Revival"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the powerful story of Jesus raising a dead man to life, emphasizing the importance of truly hearing the words of Jesus to receive life. He highlights how the spirit of the young man responded to Jesus' command to arise, showcasing the life-giving nature of Jesus' words. Bieber delves into the reasons why it is challenging to hear Jesus, pointing out the leaven of the Pharisees, self-preoccupation, and incessant talking as hindrances. He stresses the need to repent of these obstacles and offers practical steps to enable believers to hear and respond to the life-giving words of Jesus.

Transcript

As he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." And he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" And "God has visited his people!" And this report concerning him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding

country. Luke 7:12-17

The young man was dead. The spirit which had been joined to his body since conception, had spoken, worked, smiled through that body was now soaring in worlds beyond our comprehension toward a destination assigned to it by God.

Suddenly the spirit of the young man hears itself addressed in words,

"Young man, I say to you, arise."

Instantly it stops its journey, reverses its direction and faster than light speeds back to the house where it once was ... and by the power of those same words is joined itself to that body with a life that comes straight from God. The body begins to breathe ... the man sits up and begins to speak as if awakening from a dream.

The dead man came to life by hearing Jesus speak.

"The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall live."

"It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you they are spirit and they are life...."

...and those words raise the dead.

But there were many who heard Jesus speak ... and they heard, and they heard, and they heard, but they did not hear ... and so they began to lose what life they had. They were already in the region of the dead.

"As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever." This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum. Many of his disciples, when they heard it said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" John 6:57-60

....they were hearing and hearing, but not hearing.

But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you that do not believe."...After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him.

John, 6:61-66

....they heard and heard and heard, but did not hear.

Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." John 6:67-68

...."You have the words that give life."

But to receive the life that is in those words spoken from the mouth of Jesus, we have to hear. When I talk about hearing those words, I'm talking about something more than reading words from the printed page of our Bible and comprehending with our minds. Any Pharisee can do that.

Something more than hearing words from the mouth of some preacher and comprehending them with the mind. Any Pharisee can do that. I'm talking about hearing the word coming straight from Jesus.

Whether we're reading the Bible or hearing some man or woman speak or standing alone in a room in utter silence... to hear his word. When we hear we live. When we hear and hear and hear but don't hear we lose what life we have.

So, why is it so hard to hear? Looking back over our lives, those periods when we were consciously hearing Jesus speak to us were the times when we were alive. Those periods, when we were hearing and hearing but not hearing, we were dead.

Why is it so hard to hear Jesus ... really hear? There are three things that get in the way.

- 1 .The leaven of the Pharisees.
2. Our preoccupation with ourselves.
3. Our incessant talking.

First, we have to get rid of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. The leaven of the Pharisees is the disease which often afflicts religious people. The tendency to live behind a mask, to utter all the right words when our hearts are far away. To smile a smile of love when our hearts are filled with hate.

If that leaven affects our relationship with just one other person, it will pretty soon touch all relationships with all people. It's a yeast, it spreads, there's nothing we can do about it once it gets hold. And it has to be cast out. How do we get rid of it? By pulling up the shades, opening the window, opening the door, letting the light come in, taking off the mask.

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness we lie and do not live according to the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, if we take off the mask, admit the truth of our own need and our own sin, then we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

Second, we have to get rid of our preoccupation with our selves.

Jesus plants the seed, the word, and it begins to grow in our hearts. Pretty soon, it gets choked by the cares and the riches and the pleasures of this life until no fruit comes to maturity.

The cares everybody has cares ... it's part of life.

- What are we going to do for our sick child?
- Who's going to find out what's wrong with my car?
- How am I going to pay that bill?

Those are legitimate cares. And as long as my heart is fixed on Jesus, seeking first his kingdom, looking to him, then I can handle these cares. And by his grace I'll know what to do about these cares. But if I allow my heart to become preoccupied with these cares I will not hear his voice.

The riches and the riches affect both the wealthy and the poor among us. Mammon ... money and the things that money can buy. We all have to deal with money. We have to buy those shoes, get the groceries, put gas in our cars... it all takes money ... it's part of life. If I seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, if my heart is fixed on Jesus, I'll be able to put money in its place and make it serve. But if I allow my heart to become preoccupied with money and things...then I cannot hear his voice.

Pleasures when we're called to follow Jesus we're called to adventure and not to dullness. The life of following Jesus is loaded with joy in the midst of sorrow and pain and rejection. And as long as my life is

fixed on obedience to him, trusting him,....I will have joy.

But if I allow my heart to begin to sink down and accept the creed of "happy time America ... you only go around once ... get all the gusto you can ..." then I become afflicted with the "fun syndrome."...How come everybody else has so much fun all the time? We never have any fun!

I'm so busy chasing after fun I never hear his voice.

The third thing we have to get rid of is our own incessant talking.

Some of us talk a lot with our mouths. Some of us don't talk so much with our mouths, but inside our hearts we're going at it all the time. Those of us who talk with our mouths are often quick to quote scriptures...

- We have a scripture for everything.

- We have a judgment for everything.

- We know what the answer is and we'll ram it down anybody's throat who'll listen ... even those who won't.

Those of us who tend to be verbally quiet often make all kinds of racket inside ... we're inwardly passing judgment, criticizing, complaining, murmuring, brooding. That's talk too. And as long as my life is full of talk I can't hear his voice.

Now once we've repented of the negatives these things have to be pushed out of the way. There are some positive things that will really help us to hear the voice of the Lord.

First, it would help us immensely if we would give God a chance to open our ears.

Morning by morning he wakens, he wakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.

The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward.

Isaiah 50:1-5

Isaiah the prophet finds it necessary, morning by morning, to have his ears awakened and opened.

God the Son, Jesus, our Messiah divested now of his divine prerogatives, truly a man (though God) finds it necessary morning by morning to have the Father open his ears. So he goes off by himself to a lonely place and prays.

How in the world are we going to get by with less? Those of us who already are somewhat disciplined in a prayer life, realize the necessity of doing this every day, need also to learn that this time of prayer is not only for praise,

thanksgiving,

worship,

intercession,

but it also is a time to be still and to listen. If all we do during the time we're alone with God is talk, how can we hear his voice? And those of us who have yet to begin a discipline ... we promised ourselves so many times..."I'm going to do it today. I know I need to," but we don't,.....find that just as surely as you cannot survive without food or air or water ... in the things of the kingdom there is absolutely no way we can survive if we don't allow God to open our ears.

The second thing we need to do that will help us to hear Jesus speak is to learn to turn the tender side of our heart toward him as he speaks.

Those on the good soil are they who having heard the word hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Holding the word fast in an honest and good heart. The heart, the will, the center of our life is like our hand. It has a tender part and a hard part. The tender part receives and the hard part strikes. The tender part is childlike...the hard part is like the adult. And so Jesus says,

"Unless you humble yourself and become like children you'll never enter the kingdom of heaven."

We have to open up this tender part and receive. When Jesus says to us, "Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those you abuse you,"

and we say,

"Yes Lord, but...."

we're turning the hard part toward him ... nothing ever happens. We hear and hear and hear, but we don't truly hear.

When Jesus says to us, "Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you," and we open our heart and say,

"I don't know how I'm going to do it Lord, but here's my heart, help me. Receive it, show me the way," then we're opening the tender part and the life of the word comes in and gives us the power to do what before was impossible.

One night you're home with nothing to do. So you turn by accident to one of those evening soaps. Before you know it, the tender part of your heart is wide open and all the garbage comes creeping in. Suddenly the phone rings... (God in his mercy.) It's an old friend you haven't heard from in five years and he or she says, "I have a problem, you mind if I come over and talk?"

Now, which side of the heart responds? If I say, "Sorry Jack, I'm busy tonight," that's the hard part of my heart toward the word coming to me from the Lord himself.

But if I say,

"Come on over, Jack," I open the tender part of my heart to a call from God and I'm brought from death into life.

The final thing we need to do to enable the word to really be heard, is the minute I'm clear as to what God wants me to do, to do it without delay.

"Young man, I say to you, arise." Instantly he sits up.

"Peace be still." The wind obeys.

"Stretch forth your hand."

The man with the withered hand puts it out and it becomes whole like the other.

"Levi, follow me."

Levi gets up immediately from his tax office ... doesn't even bother to get his papers together and he's on his way.

But when Jesus says, "Follow me," and the man says, "I'll follow you Lord, but first let me go and bury my father, let me go and say goodbye to those at my home,"... death. Every second we delay obedience, once we know what we're called to do, is a second that leads us deeper into death.

If the Lord makes clear to us some specific thing we need to do today, don't let the sun go down, make the decision now and fulfill it before the sun goes down.

"It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you, they are spirit and they are life."

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Those words bring us from death to life if we hear.

But if we hear and hear and hear but don't really hear we move from life into death.

- We need to repent of our preoccupation with ourselves so we can hear.

- We need to repent of our endless talking so we can hear.

- We need to let God open our ears so we can hear.

-We need to turn a tender part of our hearts always toward the Lord so we can hear.

-And we need to act on what we have heard so we can keep hearing ...

... and the word will flow out of us like rivers of living water and

bring the dead to life.

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