

## WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT? WHO YOU LISTEN TOO!

When I was three or four, my mother told me not to do something. She watched through the window of the house as I went out the door and did it. She called me back in the house and ask me if I did it. Thinking I was safe in telling her I did not do it, because she was not with me when I did it -- I lied. She said nothing and sent me back out to play. You guessed it, I did it again. Only this time what she was trying to protect me against got me and the pain resulting pain sent me running back to mom crying. She asked what happened and through the tears I did not think to lie, but told her everything. She did not rebuke or scold, did not even tell me "I told you so," rather she explained her desire to protect me from being hurt. She also explained she could not always be with me to be sure I would not disobey her, but God would always be with me. He would know if I disobeyed even if I lied to her and He would teach me what I needed to learn if I did not learn from her. What had happened was not serious and I had learned God was always watching me. If I did what was wrong He would teach me why it is good to obey the parents He placed over me.

Years later, sometime during the sixth grade, some older kids tempted me to join them after school, to go to a house where the girls and they were going to have fun. I had to choose between doing what sounded like fun and obeying my mother's rule to go directly home from school. Every time I was asked to go have fun with the kids I reported home as the rule required instead. Years later, having missed out on all the fun, those kids were deep into some heavy deadly sins and some had police records. I felt as though I was like Job, with God having built a hedge around me to protect me. I realized that my mother's trust in God had been taught to me and listening to her was one of the most important things I ever did.

God had spoken to my mother and guided her in His wisdom. As I grew and began to make serious life choices on my own, I knew it was really important who you listened to, who you allowed to have authoritative influence in your decision making process. Many today do not think through this critical process. It is as if they were deaf to the reality of God's voice. Even those who confess Jesus as Lord, more often than not, do not listen to hear who speaks to them, but are busy about making choices based on a myriad of voices found in the clutter of their reality. Two questions each must answer today are: "Whose voice do you hear today? When you hear God's voice, do you believe Him? Keep in mind, there is no lie where God is--so you must be genuine. My mother understood I might choose to lie to her, but she taught me I could not lie to God. If I try to do that I only fool myself into thinking the lie is truth and everyone knows that will only end in destruction. Consider what Paul wrote to the Hebrews about the "voice of God" and "today."

### **Heb 1:1-31**

**1 In the past God spoke** to our forefathers **through the prophets** at many times and in various ways,

**2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son**, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

**Who speaks to us today?** Most recognize this scripture and say the Son has spoken, but not to me personally. Or they say the Son speaks to me through the Bible when I read it. Some may even go so far as to say, the preacher proclaimed the word of God last Sunday in his sermon. Listen to what the Son said to His followers as recorded by John. Be very clear on this point: there is only one voice we need to hear and that is the voice of God. And it is most important to whom you give your attention to and allow the power of influence to have its effect. When and where does the voice of God come to us—how? Are you sure?

#### **John 12:44-50**

44 Then Jesus cried out, **"When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.**

**45 When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me.**

46 I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

47 "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.

48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.

**49 For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.**

**50 I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."**

#### **John 14:12-31**

12 I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.

14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--

17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

22 Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

**24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.**

**25 "All this I have spoken while still with you.**

**26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.**

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

**28 "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.**

**29 I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.**

**30 - 31 I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. "Come now; let us leave.**

#### **John 16:1-28**

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2 They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.

3 They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.

4 I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.

5 Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'

6 Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief.

**7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.**

8 - 11 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

12 **"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.**

**13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.**

**14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.**

**15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.**

16 "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me."

17 Some of his disciples said to one another, "What does he mean by saying, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,' and 'Because I am going to the Father'?"

18 They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying."

19 Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, "Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me'?"

20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.

21 A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.

22 So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

23 In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

**25 "Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father.**

**26 In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf.**

**27 No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.**

28 I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."

#### **Matt 10:32-42**

32 "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.

33 But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

34 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

35 - 36 For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law--a man's enemies will be the members of his own household."

37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;

38 and **anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.**

**39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.**

**40 "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me.**

**41 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.**

**42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."**

Who spoke to you when the Son gave the sermon on the mount? Who spoke to Nicodemus in the night? Who sent the sermon into the heart of the preacher and then delivered it last Sunday? Who moved through the workplace last week in the heart of the Christian? John the Apostle said that no one can say Jesus is Lord without the Holy Spirit being present. If the least of our Lord's brothers or sisters is sent by God, having been created in Christ to do a work God purposed to accomplish, and you accept it—think of the reward that is yours. Our Lord sent that one to you, and if you accept it you have accepted not only the Christ, but the Father who sent Him. And if you accept a prophet you receive a prophet's reward, not to mention the salvation of your soul. But what if you reject him? Read what Paul writes to the Hebrews!

#### **Heb 2:1-4**

**1 We must pay more careful attention**, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

**2 For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment,**

**3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?** This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

**4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.**

**Look again into the scripture that the Apostles recorded, and ask how does God judge?** Focus now on the source of reward and judgment. What danger is there in hearing Jesus' comment that He did not come to judge the world but to save it, while ignoring the context in which He said it? One must not separate one act of our Lord's obedience to the Father from all the others and build a religion upon it alone. The whole of His life is a testimony to trust in God. What part of that living will condemn the unrighteous on judgment day? Notice as you read how God makes His reward available to us? What honor has been shown to those who have faith? What is faith—what does it look like? Why do preachers hesitate to bring sermons that tell us Jesus said that He did not come to bring peace—but a sword? How does all of what Jesus said relate to what Paul is writing to the Hebrews?

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**42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."**

When we consider what Jesus thinks is real, and then observe how the Spirit confirmed to Paul what our Lord was saying, we begin to see how important it is to listen to all of what God is saying. Just as the crucifixion of Jesus becomes foolishness to those perishing and the power of God to those saved it has at the same time a smell of death among some and the sweet smell of an acceptable sacrifice to others. And so the "Word" spoken by God becomes the source of two different things: the reward of eternal life to those who believe or the judgment and wrath of God to those do not believe it. Notice how our Lord takes our response to the "Word" and makes it the "work of God" required of man. Particular attention must be given to the relationship between the one who speaks and the one who listens, between the one who teaches and the one who learns. The more difficult the lesson, the slower the student, the more talented the teacher must be. How talented is God when it comes to teaching?



## **John 6:26-69**

26 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

**27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."**

28 Then they asked him, **"What must we do to do the works God requires?"**

29 Jesus answered, **"The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."**

30 So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?"

31 Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

32 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.

33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

34 "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."

35 Then Jesus declared, **"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."**

36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.

**37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.**

**38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.**

**39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.**

**40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."**

41 At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

42 They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

43 "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered.

**44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.**

**45 It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.**

**46 No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.**

**47 I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.**

48 I am the bread of life.

49 Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died.

50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die.

51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

53 Jesus said to them, **"I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.**

**54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.**

**55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.**

**56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.**

**57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.**

**58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever."**

59 He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

60 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, **"This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"**

**61 Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you?**

62 What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!

**63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.**

**64 Yet there are some of you who do not believe."** For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.

65 He went on to say, **"This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."**

66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

**67 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.**

**68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.**

**69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."**

**Why is it some will take communion and think they are in Christ, but do not know or care to know what He has said?** How ridiculous it must have sounded to those pious ones standing there that day—become a cannibal, eat human flesh and drink blood! Had they understood it was not Jesus speaking any more than it was Moses who was leading their forefathers through the wilderness, maybe then they would not have turned away. When Moses was gone too long—God was still there in power leading them, they did not need to make their own god. Jesus is no longer in this world—yet He is still here, still speaking and working out God's purpose. Taught by God through the Prophets and now through the Son. And just why does God teach us? What is it that He expects to accomplish? What is it that God has done and is still doing through Christ? And if God is never changing, what is it that He wants man to do—that I must do today?

### **Eph 3:2-21**

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you,

3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

**6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.**

7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

8 - 9: **Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery,** which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

10 - 11: **His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.**

13 I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

14 - 15: For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

16 - 21: I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. **And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.** Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, **according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!**  
Amen.

**Consider the impact of this reality then as Paul continues to try and move the Hebrews to listen and act in response to God's voice.** If God was angry with the Jewish forefathers because they would not listen to the prophets and they did not act as if knew His ways, how much more deserving of His anger are we, if we do not listen and behave with understanding after having confessed to believing we have heard His Son clearly represent His way of fulfilling His purpose? How do we confess before men that we believe God is worthy of trust and that He is able to care for us as a Father? Is not the ministry of the Church which shows the "manifold wisdom of God" simply to trust

God and love as Jesus loved caring for those God brings us in contact with daily? If we love the people of the world as God loved them and sent His son to make Himself known and understood, our actions will be concrete, tangible examples of the very same things He did day by day. Just as the Father told Him what to say and how to say it, what to do and where to go, so He has sent from the Father the same Holy Spirit to transform our nature enabling us as new creatures to accomplish the Holy Father's purpose. And just as Paul exhorts the Hebrews, becoming again the "voice of God Today," He also speaks to us! What does he call us to do?

### **Heb 3:1-19**

**1 Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.**

2 He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house.

3 Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.

4 For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.

**5 Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future.**

6 But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

**7 So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice,**

**8 do not harden your hearts** as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert,

9 where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did.

10 That is why **I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.'**

11 So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'

12 -14 **See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.**

15 As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."

16 Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt?

17 And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert?

**18 And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed?**

**19 So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.**

**The ministry of "Christ's Church" of which we are a part, must therefore, be full of hearts turning toward God and away from sin. We must understand the threat of sin—that it hardens and blinds the one who turns away from God. Those who are thus**

trapped by sin are generally unaware of their situation and just as Christ came and ministered to them so must we. Just as He trusted and believed in the power and wisdom of God, so we must commit to the Father's way of fulfilling or completing His will.

How many ways can we "encourage one another daily" and show our belief in God's love and power? How many ways can we show we "believe and trust" the voice of God? How can I fix my thoughts, all of them on Jesus so the voice of God speaks clearly though every part of my life? If they could not enter because of their unbelieving heart, how do I ensure my heart always believes? Can you say: "I have faith in Christ and I am doing the things that He was doing. Yes, even greater things we now do because He went to be with the Father and now we are one by God's power and purpose." If you cannot say that—who are you listening to that tells you that you cannot? What did God say? Can you be taught by God? What do you believe? Listen to the prayer of our Lord, offered just before He went into the garden to be betrayed and abandon by His disciples. Listen to what He ask the Father for to sustain those who believed and trusted Him.

### John 17

"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. **Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.** I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

**I have revealed you** to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For **I gave them the words you gave me** and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. **I pray for them.** I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, **protect them by the power of your name-- the name you gave me-- so that they may be one as we are one.** While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but **I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.** I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. **My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.** They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. **Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.** As you sent me into the

world, I have sent them into the world. **For them I sanctify myself**, that they too may be truly sanctified.

**My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message**, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Father, **I want those you have given me to be with me where I am**, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. **I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.**"

In Philippi Paul exhorted the Christians there to "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." And for the Ephesians he prayed: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!"

Let us today hear the "voice of God" and let Him teach us so we too can be part of His work of love toward man.

Can you believe the honor shown us?