

Hearing is not enough

24 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” John 5:24

Beloved in the Lord,

It can be dangerous to hear a warning, but then not heed it. Many people have been seriously injured or even killed simply because they have not heeded a warning. For example many people drown in our waters every year simply because they do not heed the warnings about rips and do not swim between the flags. How many have been washed off the rocks while fishing in places where there are clearly visible warnings? The examples I could cite are many.

Personally, I believe that the problem is that more or less all of us suffer from a degree of arrogance. We think to ourselves – that warning does not apply to me. I will be ok. I can handle it. There was a great cartoon in the paper recently depicting a headstone in the famous last words cemetery. The headstone read – “manual schmanual – I’ll figure it out myself!”

This sort of thinking is prevalent especially amongst youth who somehow think that they are invincible or untouchable. Sadly the statistics prove this to be a false security. Too many young lives are lost in stupid ways simply because they either do not think, or think they are invincible.

The words of Jesus cited in our text for today teach us that it is important not only to hear the word of God, but also to heed it. Hearing is not enough. We must believe and act on what we hear. Jesus said: **“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”**

The opposite is also true, namely, he who hears God’s Word but does not heed it, does not have eternal life and is still under judgement of death – eternal death. This is a serious thing. Jesus taught:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

John 3:16-18

Herein is that important word faith. Faith saves, unbelief condemns. It really is that simple. We need more than intellectual faith, we need faith that trusts in Jesus as the only Saviour for our sin, that trusts that Jesus is the only way to God.

Jesus said: **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” John 14:6**

My friends, it is of utmost importance that we understand this truth. Many do not. Many say: "I don't accept that Jesus is the only way to God. There are many ways, as long as you have faith." That is not what the Bible teaches. There is only one way, one truth and only life in one and that one is The Lord Jesus Christ.

Last Sunday we pondered the question: "Can God do as He pleases?" We came to the conclusion that the correct answer is yes, because He is almighty God. He is the Creator and Sustainer of life. All things are His and subject to Him.

God has certain laws and He has shown us the way to Him. His laws state that the wages of sin is death. Without the shedding of blood there cannot be forgiveness for sin. Because God is Holy, the blood for forgiveness also had to be Holy. The only one who could meet this requirement was the sinless Son of God- Jesus Christ. The only solution was for God to sacrifice His sinless and innocent Son for us. Jesus blood is the only atonement for sin that God will accept. Full stop. There is no debating this issue. That is how it is!

Jesus once told a parable about a King who prepared a wedding feast, We read in Matthews Gospel chapter 22:

¹ Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, ² "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. ³ And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. ⁴ Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast."'" ⁵ But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, ⁶ and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. ⁸ Then he *said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.' ¹⁰ Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.

¹¹ "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, ¹² and he *said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen."

There are many things we could say arising from this parable, but today let us focus upon the guest who came in the wrong clothes. In order to understand we must delve a little into the culture of the day. When the King prepared a wedding feast he not only sent invitations, but also provided the appropriate attire for those who were coming. The guests did not come in their own clothes, but wore the clothes that the King provided. You were not allowed to come in your own outfit.

That is why the King asks the man: "How did you come in here without wedding clothes?"

Interestingly the man was speechless in the presence of the King. He did not know what to say.

The wedding gown represents the robe of Righteousness. When we accept Jesus as our Saviour and Lord we are given a garment of salvation and clothed with a robe of righteousness. This is our attire for the Wedding Feast of the Lamb at the end of the ages in eternity.

This is provided for us by God. If we presume to be at the wedding feast in our own gown we will be rejected. Our own righteousness is no good. We fall far short from the glory of God and our own righteousness is as a filthy rag. Our own religion does not cut it. Christ and Christ alone!

Let us return for a moment to the fact that the man was speechless. I think that this is very significant. I believe that many on the day of judgement will stand speechless before the Lord Jesus Christ, because they have not accepted His way.

This man probably thought to himself: I don't need the King's gown, I will go in my own. I don't believe what his servants say. I will come my own way. I am lord of my life. Well his end was tragic.

I am telling you this so that you would not be like the man here who was cast out of the King's presence. Please do not presume that you can ignore God's ways and ignore His word and still think that you will have a place in Heaven – you won't.

God will only accept those who come to Him along the right way and that Way is Jesus Christ.

When we acknowledge our sin and when we repent of it, and accept Jesus blood as full payment for our sin, then we are on the right Way. We are clothed with our robe of Righteousness and we are secure in Him.

When this is our status then all of God's promises are ours. We are blessed in every way. We live with the knowledge that we have eternal life. We know that when our eyes close in death they will open to life with Jesus in His Father's house.

In the meanwhile, we no longer live for ourselves, but for Him. We live life in a way that He is glorified and honoured. We live a life that invites others to follow Jesus. Our lives reflect His love.

Please understand that to hear is not enough. We need to believe and trust in God.

Today you have heard the Truth, What will you do with it?

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.