

Hearing alone is not sufficient - Sunday, August 10th 2014

“And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. ²⁰ And it was reported to Him, “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You.” ²¹ But He answered and said to them, “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.” Luke 8:19-21

Beloved in The Lord,

Hearing alone is not sufficient. There are many people who hear God’s Word, but it goes in one ear and out the other. If you do not act upon what you have heard, then your listening has been in vain.

There is an old story about a young pastor who just started in a new congregation. He preached exactly the same sermon for three weeks in a row. The elders spoke to him about it, but to no avail. Next Sunday he preached exactly the same sermon again. The elders called up his Bishop and told him what was going on. The Bishop came to see the pastor and asked him why he was preaching the exact same sermon every Sunday. The pastor told him: “When the congregation begin to do what I have taught them in this sermon, then I will move onto the next one.” Sometimes I can understand where this young Pastor was coming from.

Jesus clearly stated in our passage that hearing alone is not sufficient. He said: **“My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it” (Luke 8:21).**

You see, doing must follow hearing. Then there is blessing. A few chapters further on in Luke we read: **“While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed.” ²⁸ But He said, “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it”(Luke 11:27-28).**

You see it is not enough to spout religious platitudes, to participate in Church services, even to read God’s Word; - you need to observe it, obey it, do it!

Blessings come when we hear God’s Word and observe it. A while ago we considered that “Faith is a verb”. Faith is action. James puts it so well in his Epistle:

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. ²⁵ But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:22-25).

You see, James clearly tells us that listening without doing is futile. James likens listening and doing to observing yourself in the mirror. For example if you look in the mirror and notice your hair is untidy, and walk away not doing anything about it, your looking was in vain. If you take no action then your observance of yourself in the mirror has been futile.

It is of vital importance that we resolve to act upon what we hear in God's Word. The Christian faith is not a nice theory. Faith is a verb. It is active service to God. It is not merely an intellectual exercise. True faith expresses itself in good works, acts of love. As we considered last Sunday, true faith results in Holy Living. We saw that Holy Living is living separated from the world and dedicated to God for His glory and His service. Holy Living is a life dedicated and surrendered to God. A holy life strives to fulfil the great commandment to love God with all one's heart, soul and strength and to love one another.

James is encouraging us, no commanding us to prove ourselves to be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude ourselves.

One thing I love about God's Word is that it is extremely practical and down to earth. This Word encourages us to be doers. Do it! Begin to act in faith. Put into action what you hear from God. Act upon His Word.

If at the end of the service today, you simply walk out of here and think: "That was a nice sermon" but you do not resolve to act upon what you have heard, then to a great degree it was a waste of time you listening to me. Listening alone is not sufficient. You need to act. You need to exercise your faith.

Last Sunday I challenged you to consider how much time you spend each day on God and how much you spend on worldly things, such as watching TV, reading magazines, listening to the radio and so on. If I were to ask you to raise your hands if you did a stock take of your life last week, I wonder how many of you would raise your hands?

It is important to act upon what we learn. To listen, to hear alone is not sufficient.

Please understand that nothing that I say is in anyway a criticism. Everything I say, is to encourage you. I encourage you and speak the truth in love, because my heart's desire is that each one of you would grow in the fullness of Christ and live a blessed and fulfilled life.

Everything I preach from this pulpit, I practice. Everything I preach, has first spoken to my heart. I never ask you to do anything I do not do myself. As your shepherd my goal is to grow your faith, so that Jesus would be glorified through you.

I return to our text. When Jesus was told that his mother and brothers are outside and seeking to see Him, He replied: **"My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."**

Matthew writes about this same incident in his Gospel, and we get slightly more detail:

“⁴⁶ While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. ⁴⁷ Someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.” ⁴⁸ But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” ⁴⁹ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:46-50).

The very important words are: ***“Whoever does the will of My Father.”*** You see doing is the important issue. Hearing alone is not sufficient. Knowing the will of God is not sufficient. You must do the will of God. When we do the will of God, then we prove that we are members of His family. Jesus put it this way:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

The word translated love is “agape”. Agape is God’s love, the highest form of love. When we love one another with God’s love, then we know and others know that we are truly God’s children. Love is also a verb. It is an action, not just a feeling. It is not enough to simply say “I love you”. It must be proven by action. Love has to manifest itself in acts of love.

Jesus is our supreme example. Not only did He say that He loves us, He proved it, He demonstrated it, by laying down His life for us; by dying on the cross in our place., for our salvation.

“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” (John 3:16).

God loved and He gave. Christ Jesus loved and in love He shed His own innocent and holy blood for us, to pay our sin debt in full, so that believing on Him, we could be saved from death and hell.

Considering this great love of God, John wrote in his first Epistle:

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1.John 4:7-11).

We are obliged to love one another. You have heard this today. Hearing alone is not sufficient. Go do it. Love one another with God’s love. Beloved let us love one another. Let’s

do it! Legends tell us that in his latter years the aged Apostle John spoke very little, however he would always speak in every gathering and say: "Beloved, love one another." John knew how important it was that not only they listen, but that they act.

May we resolve today to love another. Truly love one another. Not only in word, but also in deeds.

Let us show the world, let us show our society that we are Christ's disciples, that we are children of the living God. May we live a life that reflects Him; a life that bears witness to His love. May we not be hearers only, but also doers!

May God help us.

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All Bible quotations taken from NAS Bible.