



Ministry Toolkit: EARS

Sunday 3rd November 2024

Genesis 3:8-10

Think on this. To let others know who we are and what we think, we tend to rely on our mouths. Although last week's message provided us with ample evidence that our actions to do more to create this than our words. But how do we get to know who others are? More importantly how do you get to know who God is? And how can I know what He is saying to me?

As you walk through this life you will come across thousands of voices, with different, opinions, ideas, and ways of thinking. But in all that there is one voice you need to hear to sharpen your hearing.

Let's go back to day one of the gospel – back to the Garden of Eden, in Genesis 3:8-10,

1

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where *are* you?” ¹⁰ So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

The gospel finds its way to us because God makes a move to come and be with them again. How did they know this? They HEARD Him. Then God speaks – “where are you?”. **Not because He had lost them, but because they were lost without Him.** The gospel first gets to our ears with questions around life that sound a lot like, “Where are you?” That is the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus.

2

Now the crucial thing is Adam's response – “I heard your voice in the Garden”. Then Adam says, “and I hid myself.

3

Because everyone has sinned, everyone is a sinner.

Because everyone is a sinner, everyone knows shame.

Because everyone knows shame, everyone tries to hide.

Because everyone tries to hide from God, God comes to us...

With a question – **Where are you?**

4

God's mission is the pattern for the church's mission; for your mission as a Christian. It's the pattern that Paul identifies in Romans 10:13-15,

For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." ¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent?

5

- The gospel is put into the hands of proclaimers (preachers)
- The proclaimers are sent
- Then unbelievers will hear
- Then unbelievers can believe
- Then they can call on His Name

And that is what brings sinners like you and me back into relationship with God. But notice what will happen if you take the ears out of the equation. No one will hear. If they don't hear, they can't believe. And then they can't call on His Name. And so they will remain outside of the Kingdom of God...forever.

6

This is why after He speaks the parable of the sower in Mark 4, Jesus says in Mark 4:9,

And He said to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

7

The ultimate purpose in God speak is to bring you back into relationship with Himself. As it says in Matthew 17:5,

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. **Hear** Him!"

8

God's purpose in sending His Son, is not so that you will hear good teaching or hear good morals, but **that you would hear God – and call on His Name.**

9

And that is the testimony of the church in Ephesus as Paul reminds them in Ephesians 1:13,

In Him you also trusted, after you **heard** the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

10

Hearing also comes before the work of prayer in Colossians 1:9,

For this reason we also, since the day we **heard** it (that is their faith in Jesus Christ, cf V4), do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Now before we consider practically what this means for the Christian, there is one other point to consider. Hearing does not guarantee specific outcomes. Just because someone hears God does not mean they will respond. Consider the parable of the sower as told in Matthew 13. Jesus' explanation makes it clear all four responses, whether unbelief or a life of fruitfulness, all followed hearing the word.

11

12 And so what, you might ask, is my responsibility? Hebrews 3:15, says,

while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

A hard heart can kill anything you hear.

And then on in Hebrews 4:2,

13

For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

Unless the word that God speaks to you is mixed with faith in your heart, then there will be no profit for you in what God says.

14

And so this brings to ask what then should this look like in our lives? How can we sharpen our hearing?

15

1. Ask, who do I listen to?
2. Cut out the voices that do not speak truth.
3. Listen to the voices that speak truth.
4. Listen, in order to understand, not in order to reply.
5. Listen to the Voice of Truth – Jesus, His Word. Listen often.
6. When listening to God, ask, (1) do I believe this?, (2) what am I going to do with what I believe; what does this look like in my life?