

Scripture Reference: Luke 16:19-31

Date: September 14, 2014

Title: "A Failure to Hear God"

Focus: God speaks all around humanity. Man chosen not to hear Him. - Hearing God Series (6 of 12)

In this passage readers find Jesus is speaking with His disciples. This assembly probably consists of more than just the twelve, but the larger crowd of people who followed Jesus seeking to learn from Him (15:1). Jesus' topic is what is of real value. Jesus uses several stories to illustrate His lesson. Two of them are familiar to many, the Prodigal Son (15:11-32) and the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31). What is interesting about these tales is there is nothing to indicate they are parables. It seems these are accounts come from real life. Maybe the "names have been changed to protect the innocent"?

As was usually the case, when Jesus taught the people, the Pharisees were present to keep abreast of what He said and to challenge Him when He deviated from what they thought to be truth. It is the scoffing of the Pharisees that prompts Jesus to tell the account of the rich man and Lazarus.

In talking about the fallacies of material wealth, Jesus makes a statement about God speaking and people's capacity to miss hearing Him. It is this statement that adds to our understanding of hearing God and the ease with which what God has to say can be missed.

The Peak of the Story (vv. 29-31)

Jesus story is about a rich man, who goes unnamed, and a poor, diseased, beggar named Lazarus. Even the introduction foretells Jesus' point.

We find a finely dress man, "*joyously living in splendor every day,*" who is unknown. However, this poor nobody's name is known to God. This is the point of Jesus' teaching. While there is nothing inherently wrong with wealth, "*what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul (Matt. 16:26)?*"

However, soon the tables are turned. The unnamed billionaire and Lazarus both die. The billionaire's wealth offers him no benefit for eternity, while Lazarus, apparently faithful to God since His name is known, enters into rest comforted in Abraham's Bosom.

But, whatever the rich man's spiritual failing may have been, he loved his bothers enough to ask Father Abraham, "*send [Lazarus] to my father's house—for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment*" (v. 28).

Setting aside the theological ramifications of the rich man's plea, In Jesus' answer He makes clear He understood God speaks through the biblical testimony, the Bible.

In the Bible, God speaks (v. 29)

The Bible is not like any other piece of religious literature, i.e. the Quran, the Book of Mormon, Watchtower, etc. Jesus asserts it is the words of God Himself.

The Bible does not *contain* the words of God. It is, *in whole*, God's words as He speaks to humanity.

v. 29; *“They have Moses [The Law] and the Prophets.”*

Jesus' reference speaks directly to the OT. How much more does this apply with the NT, that testifies of Jesus.

2 Tim 3:16-17; *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”*

Heb. 4:12; *“The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

You might think, “Well, every religion claims their writings are divinely inspired.” True. But, only the Bible is proved. Only the Bible, the words of God, work. Those who listen to God in its pages have validated its claims to be profitable for leading a righteous life and exposing the heart of humanity to his sinfulness.

God does not speak in the Bible merely to look backward at what people have done. But, He continues to speak through it to how a person is to live in the present and moving forward.

2 Peter 1:19; *“We have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.”*

If a person is looking to hear God, it begins with the Bible

Jesus is also clear that the problem of hearing God rest with humanity's unwillingness to listen (v. 31)

Jesus often exhorted His audience to, "Listen up."

Mark 7:14-16; [Jesus Speaking] *“Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

Why is it mankind has difficulty hearing?

Sometimes it is because of unwillingness - The Desire for Sin

We love the sin rather than righteousness.

We don't agree with what God says.

John 3:19; *“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.”*

Other times what God says is difficult - The Weakness of Humanity

Though the Spirit of God within a disciple wants to obey God, his natural desires, tendencies, and capacities are unwilling to submit (Matt. 26:41).

To hear God takes effort, and let's be honest, we may not want to invest the effort.

It's hard to change your way of thinking and living. It's easier just to count on God's grace.

Ultimately, this is "whistling past the graveyard," thinking we won't be held accountable if we don't hear.

The Last 18 Inches

People look for God to speak; unaware that what He has to say is as close as their Bibles.

To say, "God does not speak," is incorrect. It is accurate to say, "We are not hearing." In as much as God's Word is neglected, people are turning a deaf ear to God.

Be honest with yourself, God already knows the truth. Do you really want to hear God? If not, then nothing is likely to change that.

However, if you are willing to let go of your desires and honestly approach the Bible. There, you will find the voice of God waiting for you.