

Sermon Notes

Hearing God
Whole Series

Week 1- A God Who Speaks & Hears, A Humanity that Hears and Speaks

- Are you a good listener?
- Would people say that you really hear them when they come to you?
- Do you honestly care about hearing what others say to you?
- How much of what you hear do you actually hear?
- What percentage of what people say to you do you capture, remember or act on?
- What is an acceptable percentage of hearing in your relationships?
- What is a successful amount of hearing in your different relationships?
- How long would your relationships last if people heard you as much as you heard them?
- How much does your listening demonstrate how much you care about your relationships?
- What percentage of ignoring, not acting on or forgetting what you hear is acceptable in your different relationships? (Spouse, Dating Relationship, Parents, Kids, Siblings, Coworker, Boss, Best Friend, Acquaintance, Strangers)
- Do you seek out hearing God's voice as much as you do with people?
- If a stranger asked you about hearing God, what would you say?

It's funny to ask so many questions about something that seems so basic. You might be tempted to discard or gloss over these questions as silly or unimportant, but if you stop to think about how fundamental the act of hearing is, we might find that there are few things as important to understand.

This week we start a sermon series to discover that hearing God's voice is perhaps the most foundational lesson throughout the entire Biblical narrative. If God is a relational god, how do Him people hear Him? How does God teach Him people to hear Him voice?

We are going to spend 8 weeks learning how hearing God is not an added perk, a life hack or even a self-contained activity reserved for specific times in the day. Instead we'll present a biblical worldview where hearing God's voice becomes essential and life-giving to those who belong to God. Hearing God is a posture that is birthed out of relationship because... You Listen To Those You Love. This is the big idea of our whole sermon series. Christians are people who long to hear God because we listen to who we love. How can we be called Him if we never learn or long to hear from Him?

This series will take a look at how central hearing God's voice is throughout the biblical narrative. Hearing God is not just a task to complete and then move on from. Hearing God's voice includes our whole heart and we'll see what the Bible says about it.

Our Big Idea→ You Listen To Those You Love.

Our Definition→ Hearing God is...

- Tuning our Attention towards God so that we are ready at all times to Capture, Remember and Act on what God is saying.
 - Attention
 - A satellite is useless until some type of receiver is linked to it. No message is ever received until a receiver is positioned to receive it. We will never hear God if we don't learn that we need to turn our attention towards Him. If we want to hear what God is saying, we need to give him our sincere attention.
 - Capture
 - How does God speak to us? If God talks, how does He do that? How does the Bible describe Him speaking and how do I know that I'm supposed to be receiving? How can I capture what God is saying? If God is so big, how does he speak with such little creatures? How do I know it's Him?
 - Remember
 - If we are constantly forgetting what someone says,
 - How does the relationship stay fresh over time?
 - How are we demonstrating love for the relationship?
 - If we forget what God has promised, how do we live out what He said? If God defines the worldview of a believer, how do we know how to live out this different New Human identity?
 - Act
 - How long does a relationship stay healthy and loving if there is never action? Our relationship to God is not like a normal human to human relationship. How is it possible to have a real relationship with God if we never hear what he is saying in order to obey Him? How much of what God says to us can we not act on?

After I shared our definition I moved on and made the first claim of the series...

- We can hear God because He is a God who Speaks & Hears.
 - If the God of the Bible, Yahweh, was an agnostic God and did not speak, we could not claim to hear him. The Bible presents us with a God who speaks and who speaks in ways we can hear.

A God who Speaks

- We see Him speaking in the act of Creation
 - Everything in creation originally comes into existence through God's ability to speak.
 - Genesis 1:1-4
 - 1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of

the waters.³ **And God said**, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.

- Everything is made through God speaking it into existence.
- His spoken words produce all there is...
 - Day 1 God speaks light and then it exists.
 - Day 2 God speaks and the sky is made.
 - Day 3 God speaks and dry land is made.
 - Day 4 God speaks and the Sun, Moon and Stars are made to make light.
 - Day 5 God speaks and Birds and Fish come into existence to fill the new sky.
 - Day 6 God speaks and Land Animals & Adam are made to fill the new land.
 - God speaks, and in His speaking things come into existence. We can trust that He can speak to us because His speaking is powerful. His voice can gap the long distance between us and Him.
- Another reason why we can trust God to speak to us is because in Genesis 1-4 we see that God is able to speak to every “character” in the story.
 - God Speaks to the Void/Nothingness and it is able to hear Him.
 - Before Creation there was nothing but God. God spoke to the nothingness and out of nothingness, God made everything with his Words.
 - God can speak with us because His words ordered all the nothingness.
 - God speaks to Creation Itself and it is able to hear Him.
 - When nothingness made way, He begins to tell his newly formed creation what to do and everything that He speaks into being fills the right place it’s supposed to be in. On day 1 He speaks light into existence and then on day 4 He creates the light itself to go into place.
 - God can speak with us because His words are powerful enough to create everything we know.
 - God speaks with Himself and He is able to hear Himself (weird to think about I know).
 - When He decided to make Adam, He speaks to His Trinity. Genesis 1:26-27- Let **us** make man in our image, after **our** likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. God is always in perfect unity within Himself. Father, Son and Holy Spirit communicating with each other.
 - God can speak with us because He speaks with Himself.
 - God speaks with Adam & Eve both before and after the Fall and they are able to hear Him.
 - God blesses them.

- God Gives them their boundaries in Genesis 2:16- And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
 - Then after they sin God is still able to communicate with them. In Genesis 3:9 He asks them, “Where are you?” and though they have sinned they are still able to hear His voice.
 - God also gives them their punishment in Genesis 3:16-24.
 - God can speak with us because He could speak with Adam & Eve.
- God speaks with the Serpent and he is able to hear Him.
 - In Genesis 3:14-15 he curses the deceiver. (Interesting and foundational that Satan caused Adam and Eve to sin by challenging what God had said to them. He makes them question God’s words).
 - God can speak with us because He spoke with our Enemy.
- The point of this whole section is this: We can trust God to speak because He is a God who demonstrates His ability and effectiveness to do so. He is a speaking God! He is not unwilling or unable to speak. Yahweh is a God who talks!

A God Who Hears Us

- Here are passages throughout the Old Testament. Throughout all the different stages in Israel’s history people became convinced that Yahweh heard them when they spoke to Him.
 - Adam & Eve Speaks directly with God.
 - Genesis 30:17- And **God listened to Leah**, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.
 - Exodus 2:23-24- 23 During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. 24 And **God heard their groaning**,...
 - Numbers 11:1- And the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, **and when the LORD heard it**, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp.
 - 2 Samuel 22:7- In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I called. From his temple **he heard my voice**, and my cry came to his ears.
 - Psalm 34:15- The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and **his ears toward their cry**.
 - Psalm 66:19- But **truly God has listened**; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.
 - Ezra 8:23- So we fasted and implored our God for this, and **he listened to our entreaty**.
 - Isaiah 65:24- Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking **I will hear**.
- God doesn’t just care about speaking because He is perfect in relationship. He is perfect in speaking and He is perfect in hearing because **You Listen To Those You Love**.

- There has never been a moment where God has not heard you. It might seem as though that has not been the case. You might have had experiences where you prayed to Him in excruciating times and yet those times continued. I pray that in this series we begin to process those times so that we can learn where He was in those moments and what He was doing. God hears us because He loves us.

Reasons Why We May Not Hear Him

- Sometimes He chooses Silence.
 - In God's wisdom, He knows when it is time for Him to be silent. Silence in God's hand is a life-giving tool in our development (though it drives us crazy when we're in those seasons). He is not silent all the time but we cannot ignore that at times He chooses silence.
- Inexperience
 - Like Samuel, we first need to learn that He speaks. You might not hear God because you've never been taught that you can or that you should be hearing Him. Let me start this series by saying that you can hear Him and it's the best thing you could ever be doing. There is no formula to hearing God. He speaks according to His timing and wisdom. But hearing Him is normal.
- Expectation
 - You might not hear God speaking to you because you've never been told that it should be normal for Christians to hear Him. Hearing God's voice is always special and divine but it should also be normal in our Christian walk.
- Sin
 - You might not hear God speaking to you because Sin might have you trapped. Like 1 Samuel 3, Eli was going blind at the end of his life and his blindness was a physical representation of what his sin was doing in his heart. Sin blinds us. Keeps us inwardly focused/trapped and the confession of sin is often the first thing to do in order to hear God's voice. Luckily, if you know you need to confess sin you can do it immediately. Confess your sin to God (He already knows and is gracious to forgive us → 1 John 1:9) and then call a trusted brother or sister in Christ and confess so that there is no blockage.
- Unwillingness
 - Whether through stubbornness or fear, you might not hear God speaking because you are unwilling to. Each of us knows whether or not we are truly willing to do what God says is best. And if we are not, how do we expect the God of the Universe to freely speak to you? Unwillingness is a strong reason why we don't hear God and it is my hope that throughout this series you learn that there is A- no legitimate reason to not hear what God has to say and B- when God speaks to His people He is always loving. He might be saying a hard thing but in the end love is the motivation for all He does.

Application

- Here is an exercise to train yourself to be attentive to God throughout your day.

- Everytime you enter a new room, I really mean EVERY TIME, say to yourself...
 - God are you saying anything to me in here?
 - God do you have anything for me to do in this room?
 - This helps you tune your attention to Him in our most basic routine. You go into a new room, you turn your attention to what He may be doing in that room.

The Tentative Sermon Series Master Plan

1. A God Who Speaks & Hears, A Creation that Speaks & Hears
 - a. We begin by making the claim that humanity can hear God because He is a God who both Speaks to us and Hears us. We hear Him because He makes it possible.
2. The Template: Abraham
 - a. I believe that the most consistent lesson to learn about Abraham's story is that God uses Abraham to teach us the template of hearing God's voice.
3. To Hear is to Obey
 - a. In the Old Testament there is only one word for Hearing & Obeying. Do you hear God if you are not obeying Him? Can you obey Him without hearing Him?
4. Yahweh, The Only God Who Hears
 - a. In the Old Testament God is always challenging Israel's idols and one of His most consistent criticism is that He is the only God who can hear our prayers. God is the only God who hears.
5. Jesus, The Word That Restores Our Hearing
 - a. The Logos (word of God) becomes human and we now see what that word does in the world. Jesus is the one who restores our ability to hear God's voice and gives us back our closeness to God.
6. Jesus, The Shepherd To Listen To
 - a. Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd and says that His sheep know His voice. Are we His if we don't know what he sounds like?
7. Jesus' New Humanity, Saved Through Hearing
 - a. We'll explore the unique activity of becoming saved through hearing Jesus' Gospel. How is it that hearing the story of Jesus produces such an amazing outcome?
8. Jesus' New Humanity, Unified Through Hearing
 - a. We'll explore how unity in humanity is preserved in the Church through hearing God and hearing one another. We have a special participation in creation that comes through hearing God & one another.

Week 2- The Human Template: Abraham

This Week's Big Idea→ God is the one who Sees, We are the one who Hear.

I want to take a different approach to this week's sermon notes. Instead of summarizing the sermon (you can check it out on our youtube/podcast if you want to hear it again), I want to take a moment to offer some reflections on something that is on my heart to share.

We are all approaching the topic of Hearing God from different angles. Different understandings, experiences, hurts and wounds. Some of us are eager to learn this and some of us are wary. I hope that all are trying to understand this so that they can learn to apply it and in my talking with our community I am being asked at least two different sets of questions.

Some are thinking this through and trying to have an honest intellectual struggle with this topic. The people asking this set of questions really want to understand this and so you're trying to think it all through. These are systematic questions. Some of these questions sound like this...

- How can we possibly have confidence that it's God I'm hearing?
- How can I be a good listener when I struggle to hear people right in front of me?
- Where do I begin?
- How long will it take for me to be able to hear Him?
- When I try I'm not "getting anything."
- Are there questions I should start with?
 - These are good questions to ask.

Some of us are going through the same exercise of trying to understand this topic but we have a lot of questions that are rooted in anxiety and fear. I believe that you're trying to understand and do your best but your pursuit may be rooted in fear of missing out. You might have some questions that look more like...

- How would I know I've heard Him?
- What if I'm missing something and can't hear him?
- What if I don't want to obey what I hear?
- How do I know the difference between His voice, my own desire, or an evil voice? (I want to note that this can be a non-anxious question too)
- What if I don't want to hear him?
- What if I can't hear Him because I'm not saved?
- What if I can't hear Him because He doesn't want to speak with me?
- What if other people can hear Him but I cannot?
 - I want to share peace with you if these sound more like the source of your questions.

First, I want to say that these questions are legitimate and if you would like to have a conversation about them we would have great conversation. Secondly, the purpose of this sermon note is to speak to both sets of questions by reminding all of us of one key thing... **Hearing is always done in relationship.** I have no easy formula for us to follow on this topic. I've been saying so far that Hearing God is not just an activity to do but a posture to take on. Hearing is developed over time and when time is pared with intentionality, care and attention the

real important ingredients start to grow. Some of the most important ingredients are... ***Trust & Familiarity***. There is no formula, script, playbook that replaces the importance of Trust & Familiarity when it comes to hearing in any relationship.

Often when I talk with people who are considering having kids the conversations often revolve around making plans or having enough money, but I like to remind people that the one thing no plan and no amount of money can ever take into account is the love that comes when you finally meet your kid. Your kid is no longer a concept or a well laid out plan but a real person right in front of you, a person who you instantly love and cannot wait to get to know. Being a good parent might be the hardest endeavor in life but the struggle pales in comparison when you get the privilege of learning this new person.

The same idea is true with Hearing God. In all of our attempts (our honest and our not so honest attempts) at understanding this topic, everything finds its rightful place when Hearing goes from being an activity and it becomes an important part of having a relationship with God. Scripture was originally put down on paper by people who were blown away that the God of the universe heard them and worked with them through their struggles.

- Psalm 3:4- "I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill."
- Psalm 40:1-6

1 I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. 2 He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. 3 He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD. 4 ***Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust,*** and who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie! 5 You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told. 6 ***In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear...***

We learn to hear God over time and in relationship. Don't let worry, anxiety or performance discourage you as you build a relationship with God. Ask Him to teach you to hear His voice. Over time Trust grows and makes a way for more listening. Over time Familiarity with God's voice makes a way for more listening. In a few weeks we'll cover Jesus' words in John 10:3-5, 3 "To him the gatekeeper opens. ***The sheep hear his voice,*** and ***he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*** 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, ***and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.*** 5 A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, ***for they do not know the voice of strangers.***"

When it comes to hearing God there is no quick fix. No easy formula. It's about commitment, attention and the growth of trust & familiarity. God is a good God and there is no one more worthy of listening to. His harshest word is better than anything this world can offer you. I'll finish with just one more passage. Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." Keep asking your questions because they are can help you learn how to hear God's voice.

Week 3- To Hear Is To Obey

Title- Hearing is Obeying

In a sermon series that is focused on the Bible's-long narrative on Hearing God, it would be an incomplete study if we did not focus on Obedience. Though I would never tell someone that it is better for them to not hear God's voice, I see how dangerous it is to hear God's voice and then ignore it. When I spend time thinking about which is the worst outcome (between not hearing God at all or hearing Him and ignoring what He says), I can't unsee how damaging it is to our souls when hearing is not followed up by obeying. Obeying God when He speaks is perhaps the clearest litmus test on how genuine a Christian's commitments are to Him as God. Remember, You Listen To Those You Love.

This week we looked at Jonah's example to see what happens when one of God's prophet intentionally tries to run away from His presence. Instead of summarizing the sermon, I want to ask a few follow up questions that I think I should ask before we move on. I think this week needs to be a week of realizing where we actually stand in terms of our intentions with God. It is important for you to realize whether or not you intend on being Obedient to God because that realization should be a huge eye opener for all of us. If you do not think that He is not worthy of your obedience then you need to know that.

Quick Note→ These questions do you no good if you settle for safe Sunday school answers. You may KNOW the right answer to these questions but if that is not the answer that your heart agrees with its important to know. I hope that you grapple with your real answers to these questions. Before moving on pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal where you are when it comes to being a person who hears God and obeys Him.

- I think the first thing to consider is to acknowledge whether or not you feel as though you hear Him. If a stranger came up to you on the sidewalk and asked, "Do you hear from God?" What would your answer be?
 - If yes→ do you have a habit of being responsive when you hear him?
 - If no→ do you want to be able to? (be honest here)
- Was there a time in your past when you felt God was more noticeable in your life?
 - If yes→ do you think you struggle to hear God now because there is a higher likelihood that you will not follow through with what you hear? Why did you feel him/hear him more clearly in the past? Did you trust him more earlier in your Christian walk?
- When do you think it is ok for you to not do what God has told you to do?
 - It is common for many Christians to get a sudden thought of doing something good or talking to someone about Jesus. When you find yourself in one of these moments do you have a habit of doing whatever that sudden thought is or do you talk yourself out of it? (examples could be→ telling someone about Jesus, giving a homeless person some money, encouraging someone you don't really know, introducing yourself to a stranger).

- Could it be that you don't hear God because you know that your mind's made up to not do what He has to say?
- What do you think it would take for you to learn how to be responsive to God when you think He's speaking to you?
- Is the God of the Bible a God worth obeying?

One Last Thought to Ponder.

I want to leave you with something that may or may not be true about your walk with God. Only you and the Holy Spirit will know the answer to this question and I think it is vital for all of us to know where we truly stand with it. All I want to do here is to leave you with one more thought for you and the Holy Spirit to ruminate on together. Spend time figuring this out.

- If listening to God is obeying Him→ Do I want to be a person who hears Him?
 - If your genuine answer is a firm No... Then you have serious need to rethink whether you should consider yourself to be a Christian. I am available to have these discussions if you make this realization. God loves you and He is worth obeying. It is important to realize where we are, even if that realization is not what we thought.

Week 4- The Only God Who Hears

The title of this week's sermon was→ The Only God Who Hears. I preached from 1 Kings 18 (and a few other texts that I'll include below) to see one of the primary ways that the Old Testament addresses our human tendency to worship things other than God (which is called idol worship). Often you might hear sermons that accurately say that we should not worship anything other than Yahweh and while that is 100% the right answer, we don't focus on the precise reason that the Old Testament so often gives. The Old Testament reasoning is this→ Don't worship idols because when you do you worship and hope in something that is not real. The heart reason why we should not turn to anyone other than Yahweh is that Yahweh is the only God who hears all of us and when we trust in something other than Him, our worship goes towards nothing. Only Yahweh can hear all of us. All of our worship that is directed elsewhere, no matter how sincere and genuinely misplaced, is going towards a name that does not act in this world.

When I look at my life and the idols I've served (most often my Self) I see that I've given myself to things that were not real and did not love me. I've given myself to other things for much of my life and in seasons of change I've often tried to leave in my own strength without reminding myself of the better reasons of why my worship was misplaced. I think that it is a better biblical message to remind my heart of the better WHY. My inner dialogue often sounded like this... "Pedro, don't do that, don't go there, don't look at that because it's against the rules. Or because its bad." While that is true, I'm challenged in this sermon to replace that with... "Pedro, don't do that, don't go there, don't look at that because it doesn't love you and it's not real and God is present and He can help you with something more real" (long sentence I know). I find that when I constantly remind myself of the better biblical narrative, my idol worship is challenged to see that my hope is rooted in something that isn't real, something that can't help me, something that can't offer me something good, something that can't speak to me, something that can't care for me. Only Yahweh's name can do all of this in our world and that is a much more compelling vision to use when reminding my heart to not worship creation over the creator.

I want to introduce a new passage that I didn't use in the sermon. I feel as though it beautifully adds another entry for us to see in the Bible's narrative on the subject.

Isaiah 46:5-7 (read the whole chapter because it's incredible)

5 "To whom will you liken me and make me equal,
and compare me, that we may be alike?

6 Those who lavish gold from the purse,
and weigh out silver in the scales,
hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god;
then they fall down and worship!

7 They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it,
they set it in its place, and it stands there;
it cannot move from its place.

If one cries to it, it does not answer

or save him from his trouble.

When we are precise with what is really happening when we put things before God, we realize that we are living out the words of this passage.

In reflection to verse 5→

- If Yahweh is God, how could we ever replace Him for anything that is so much smaller and less powerful?
- If Yahweh is God, why do I think I can replace Him with something that He made?

In reflection to verse 6→

- If Yahweh is God, then how could even the most beautiful thing in creation be better than Him?
- If Yahweh is God and He made all of creation, how could something be more valuable than Him? He made the gold, the silver and so why bow down to something that was made instead of the one who made it?

In reflection to verse 7→

- If Yahweh is God, why would I want a god who can't move, speak or save me when the real God can?

Here is my last thought. I felt a big urge this week to remind us to be precise with how we handle the Bible. In 1 Kings 18 we are reminded that when called upon, Baal's name did not satisfy the challenge and Yahweh's name did. I challenge you to look into your life/heart to see if you trust in Yahweh's name for everything in your life. If Yahweh is not your hope or the source of all that you trust in, I remind you that you've chosen something infinitely smaller than Yahweh. God is the only one who hears and His name is the only name that works.

These are the passages that I used in this week's sermon.

- 1 Kings 18:1-40 Yahweh vs. Baal
- 1 Samuel 5 Ark of the Covenant vs. Dagon (please read this. I said that I would interact with this passage and ultimately I did not but please read this passage. It is just a physical reminder of God's supremacy of all gods. Yahweh is God and not just another god.)
- Deuteronomy 4:28
 - 28 And there you will serve gods of wood and stone, the work of human hands, that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.
- Daniel 5:23
 - ...And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.
- Psalm 115:2-8
 - 2 Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?"
 - 3 Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.
 - 4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands.
 - 5 They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see.
 - 6 They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell.

- 7 They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat.
- 8 Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.

Week 5- Jesus, The Word of God

Hello. One of the reasons we do these Sermon Notes is so that we can be transparent and honest about the process of our preaching. Preaching, for the preacher, is not just about preparing words and studying enough materials. Preaching includes allowing the scripture to work on us first and so it is also an emotional process. I wanted to be honest that I left church frustrated because I felt as though I just couldn't speak as clearly as I wanted to. I felt as though the heart of the message was always just a bit out of reach and that is always frustrating to me. So, in order to make the heart of the sermon a little clearer to anyone who will read this... I want to give an outline to the sermon this week. I hope it communicates the heart of Easter a little bit better and it might also give more insight into the preparations that go into getting a sermon ready. Here I go. Hopefully this helps...

In a sermon series that is focused on Hearing God, I am fascinated by John's introduction to Jesus as the Word. The Holy Spirit's inspiring work when this was being written was working on overdrive because it is such a unique and elegant way to begin a story about Jesus. Jesus as the Word of God is a beautiful way of being introduced to our savior. The clearest way you will ever hear God speaking is through the gospel accounts of Jesus because in these four books we see exactly what God's Spoken Word does when it becomes a human. Let's dive into how John introduces us to the Word of God.

1. The One Story Since the Beginning

- John 1:1-2
 - 1 In the beginning was the Word,
 - and the **Word was with God**,
 - and the **Word was God**.
 - 2 He was in the beginning with God.
- As John begins his letter about Jesus, he wants two things (at least these two things) to be in our minds. He wants us to be thinking of this...
 1. Our minds should go to Genesis 1:1 and consider that This Word figure existed before Creation took place.
 2. That this Word figure was there and with God the Father and yet also God himself. He is with God The Father and yet also distinct from him.
- Before anything that was made was made, this Word figure was there. The Word is God and with God which somehow makes this figure the same and yet distinct.
- Because of this, the Word then shares God's eternal nature and was himself present before creation took place.
- John is making the case that this Word figure (Jesus) is God and that it was through him that the Father made everything. It is so important that John roots his gospel account in the Old Testament because Jesus' story is the story that the Old Testament was pointing towards. This is a new

chapter of the story but not a new story that is being told. The Word was embedded into God's story all the way back from the very beginning. The rest of the New Testament agrees with this point.

- Hebrews 1:1-3
 - Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.
- Colossians 1:15-17
 - 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
- In just the first two verses of John 1 we see Jesus is where the story was always headed. The Bible was always going to find Jesus because He is the story God has been telling.
- Now that John has given us our much needed foundation about the Word. He now starts to introduce why this Word came and what this Word accomplished for us.

2. The Word Who Creates & Incarnates

- John then transitions to give us a synopsis of what the Word came to do. Remember that this is an introduction to the rest of the story. Whatever John states here is fundamentally important to the rest of the story. Whatever gets mentioned in the introduction needs to be viewed as central to the story that is being told. John now wants us to think of two events from the Old Testament.
 - The Word came and it relates to
 - The Creation Event in Genesis
 - God's Incarnation when the Hebrew people wandered in the wilderness.
- Creation
 - Read John 1:3-13
 - :3-5-
 - a. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

- John brings up the creation event reminding us that the Word was there and that it was the one who spoke everything into existence. Furthermore this Word was two things for humanity...
 - Life
 - Light
 - a. Two things that only come from God
- Life refers to God giving humanity life and light refers to God's ability to organize chaos and evil. Jesus is continuing God's work in both by bringing us life and by showing us that when He speaks evil/chaos/sin/sickness/oppression listens to him.
- Both of these two qualities result in what John brings up in verse 12...
 - :12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to ***become children of God...***
- The Word who brings Life & Light was God's plan to bring us back in vital union with Him. Because Jesus is our Life and Light he gives us the ability to become God's children. Our relationship is restored all because the Word came to us.
 - Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, ***we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.***
- Incarnation
 - John 1:14-17
 - 14 And the Word became flesh and ***dwelt among us***, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, ***full of grace and truth.*** 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
 - The key Greek word here is Dwell- (σκηνώω) which means "To live in a tent" or "To Tabernacle."
 - The purpose of this section is to bring our minds back to when God's people were wandering in the wilderness. In those days God was directly with them as he led them through the wilderness and then stayed in the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was a tent that was set up when they camped and God's literal presence would stay in the tent.
 - Exodus 25:8 says...
 - a. 8 And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.
 - God was with them and in this tent He made them know that He was present. They were not alone.

- The heart of this is to allow us to remember that God is present with his people. He was present in the Old Testament through this tent, the Ark of Covenant and then later through the Temple. John wants us to know that this Word was also God's very presence here on Earth. The Word came and it was God.
- The heart of this section is to show God's closeness to us. He knows our struggles and knows how to sympathize with us because he became one of us. Through this closeness he brings Grace & Truth.
- There is so much richness in these words but I'm trying to keep this short and so we'll go to the last part of the sermon.

3. John's Introduction Stays Open.

- John 1:18
 - No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known...
- In the Greek, John doesn't actually finish this sentence and this is done deliberately. Think about it like this with me...
 - John could have started his gospel account in a million different ways. Through the Holy Spirit's inspiration he landed on this...introducing Jesus as the Eternal Word. The Word who created everything and then lived among us. John wants us to know that the Word came and ultimately saved us and as he is introducing the story he leaves the intro open ended. He's communicating this...
 - You want to know what the Word does when it becomes human? Continue reading and you'll see how he made a way for us to receive grace and truth and the possibility of becoming God's children. Everything you read going forwards in the story of God's Word coming to save us. The Word came and look at all that He did!

So what does this mean for Easter?

I wanted to take a different approach to our Easter Sermon this year. I wanted to speak about Jesus being the Word because in a sermon series about Hearing God, looking at Jesus is the clearest way for us to see what God says. John calling Jesus the Word isn't just a cute literary style, it's the truth that finds its roots back in Genesis 1. The Bible was always leading to Jesus because God's plan was to always have us "in Jesus" (Ephesians 1:4). The Word came and it lived a perfect life. It healed every disease. Casted out every demon. Answered every question. And then it went to the cross and was resurrected (brought back to life to never die again) by the Father. The Word came and He saved us through his death. All that he earned was then finalized when the Father resurrected him so that all those who receive Jesus as their Lord will share in his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15). On this Easter Sunday we praise the Word of God who came and gave us such a visible answer to the question→ What would God

look/sound like if He became human? You can tell someone the answer to that question this week by pointing them to read the Gospel accounts about him.

John 1 reminds us that Easter is a celebration of us becoming Children of God and receiving Grace & Truth forever.

Week 6- Jesus, The Shepherd Worth Listening To

Read John 9

- What difference can we see between Jesus and the pharisees in the way they led and ministered to people?
- What do you think is the meaning of Jesus healing this man's blindness especially on the Sabbath?
- Jesus was often reviled, but never ruffled. "One of the things worthy to be noticed in our Lord's character is his wonderful quiet of spirit, especially his marvelous calmness in the presence of those who misjudged, and insulted, and slandered him." (Spurgeon)
- What was the response of the blind man upon Jesus putting mud on his eyes?

This part of Jesus' testimony while on earth came right before He spoke the discourse of the Good Shepherd. It was a clear example of the difference between Himself as Good Shepherd and those 'other shepherds'.

Read through John Chapter 10

- Pay attention to the ongoing comparison between Good Shepherd/Thief, Robber, Hired Hand (other Shepherds)

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

10 "Truly, truly I say to you, the one who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. **2** But the one who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. **3** To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep listen to his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** When he puts all his own sheep outside, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. **5** However, a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." **6** Jesus told them this figure of speech, but they did not understand what the things which He was saying to them meant.

7 So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. **8** All those who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. **9** I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. **10** The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly.

11 “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. **12** He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters *the flock*. **13** *He flees* because he is a hired hand and does not care about the sheep. **14** I am the good shepherd, and I know My own, and My own know Me, **15** just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. **16** And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice; and they will become one flock, *with* one shepherd. **17** For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it back. **18** No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it back. This commandment I received from My Father.”

19 Dissension occurred again among the Jews because of these words. **20** Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?” **21** Others were saying, “These are not the words of one who is demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of those who are blind, can it?”

Jesus Asserts His Deity

22 At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem; **23** it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple *area*, in the portico of Solomon. **24** The Jews then surrounded Him and *began* saying to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” **25** Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me. **26** But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. **27** My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; **28** and I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. **29** My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father’s hand. **30** I and the Father are one.”

- This lesson is taught as a ‘figure of speech’, he is talking to his listeners
 - a. Owing sheep, shepherding was something people of those times understood. Sheep were valuable, basic to the economy back then. It was hospitable to slaughter a sheep for a guest, it was an expensive sacrifice
 - b. A shepherd is one of the lowest professions of the time, yet in the scriptures we see this metaphor used to describe God. Jesus is THE TRUE, GOOD Shepherd. Who came to us as a mere child, was compared to a Shepherd, the lowest of the low, even though He was the Son of God, King of Kings; to save and redeem creation.
 - c. What does this tell us about Jesus’ character?
- What makes Jesus the GOOD SHEPHERD?
 - a. **SHEPHERD** (הֹרֵעַ, *r’h*; ποιμήν, *poimēn*). A common occupation in the ancient Mediterranean. Responsible for leading, feeding, protecting, and procuring rest for their flock. Used metaphorically throughout the Bible to denote leaders and God. (Lexham Dictionary)

- b. Shepherds were responsible for the physical survival and welfare of their own or their master's flocks. In comparison with goats, which tended to fend for themselves, sheep depended on the shepherd to find PASTURE for them (cf. Ezk. 34:2, 9, 13f), and they required "quiet" water (Ps. 23:3). Shepherds also had to provide shelter, medication, aid in lambing time, and provision for lameness and weariness. Without the shepherd the sheep were helpless (see Nu. 27:17; 1 K. 22:17; 2 Ch. 18:16; Zec. 10:2; Mt. 9:36 par Mk. 6:34).
P. L. Garber, "Sheep; Shepherd," ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 463–464.
 - If we are in His Flock, we are secure and taken care of. Our needs are met because He is our shepherd
- c. The shepherd was expected to count them, one by one, calling each by its own name (Jn. 10:3), both morning and evening, for he had to render accounting for any that were missing (Gen. 31:39; cf. 1 S. 25:15f, 21). The responsible shepherd did not kill and eat his sheep, no matter how rigorous conditions might become (Gen. 31:38–40; Ezk. 34:2f, 10; Am. 3:12).
P. L. Garber, "Sheep; Shepherd," ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 464.
- d. In the OT God is the supreme "Good Shepherd"; all the admirable personal characteristics of shepherds are His superlatively. His activities as "Shepherd" of His people include feeding, watering, leading, watching over, caring for, seeking out, rescuing, and gathering His flock; bringing back the strayed, binding up the crippled, strengthening the weak, and carrying the lambs in His bosom (see esp Ps. 23; Isa. 40:11; Ezk. 34:11–24; also Ps. 95:7; 100:3; Mic. 7:14; Zec. 10:3; 11:7). P. L. Garber, "Sheep; Shepherd," ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 464.
- e. Matthew 9:36 Jesus has compassion bc they are like sheep without a shepherd
- f. 1 Peter 5:1-14: The metaphor of shepherd was used to describe other religious leaders, or governmental or entities of authority among God's people.
 - i. We learn that just as Jesus is the ultimate, true and good shepherd, God calls on pastors and other leaders to minister to His sheep in the same way Jesus led His flock. Isaiah 63:11; Jeremiah 23:2
- What makes us HIS SHEEP?
 - a. This reference of God's people referred to as sheep is used all throughout the OT and NT
 - b. **Psalm 95:7** For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice, **8** Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah (grief), As on the day of Massah in the wilderness (temptation),
 - c. Understanding the Sheep/Shepherd Metaphor:
 - i. Sheep: A measure of wealth, a great sacrifice for the owner should they kill one for a guest or give one away, or sacrifice. Dumb animals, who couldn't survive without the shepherd

- ii. The voice of the shepherd for the sheep meant, move to safety, direction, food, water, security because without the shepherd they are not capable of finding these things alone. They are completely in danger and vulnerable
- How do we differentiate between His voice vs others
 - a. Thief/robber enter by climbing another way: usurps authority, wants to steal the sheep. The only reason why one would climb in another way was to steal, to overpass the 'authority'=shepherd that laid by the gate
 - b. The Shepherd: He goes through the door (God allows Him to enter), He has permission, free access. Sheep from different shepherds at times would sleep in the same pen and the gatekeeper would only allow those to come and retrieve the sheep.
 - c. Jesus' voice brings us:
 - i. Freedom: Go in and out
 - ii. Provision: Find pasture (& still waters Psalm 23) away from danger
 - iii. Abundant life : satisfaction and contentment
 - iv. Salvation: Jesus will lay down His life for us
 - v. Unity: one flock one shepherd, there won't be confusion, more than one voice to follow, conflicting voices
 - vi. Father and Him know each other, Hebrews 3:6/John 1:18 "No one has seen God at any time; God the only *Son*, who is in the arms of the Father, He has explained *Him*."
 - d.
- What happens to the sheep that have no shepherd/can't hear his voice
 - a. **Ezekiel 34:5**
- Even though Jesus' voice in our lives may not always or ever be audible, His sheep hear it. If this is hard for you, we want to help you do this! Like anything else, you learn it through experience, through relationship, through Knowing Him intimately. HIS VOICE is recognizable by His character, if the voice you hear contradicts who God is in His trinity, it is not from Him. It will not bring you to do or think or be in anything that is sinful or against Him. That is our parameter
- There are other voices that may want to take His place in your lives, His voice is distinguishable from that of the robber, hired hand. What voices in your life other than His may you be entertaining, or not fleeing from?
- Like sheep in the wilderness, we may not always see where our Shepherd is taking us or calling us to, but as we know Him, we recognize His call and KNOW that He is bringing us to pasture, to still waters, to provision, to security. There is nothing in our being that should response in fear or distrust, because when the
- voice we HEAR AND LISTEN to is Jesus', we have assurance that it will be for our good.

<p>The Good Shepherd</p>	<p>False Teachers</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enters by the door ● Gatekeeper opens the door for Him ● Sheep hear His voice ● He calls his sheep by name ● Leads them out ● Goes before them ● I AM door of the sheep ● Provides salvation and good pasture ● Lays down his life for the sheep ● Lays down His life, takes it back up ● Authority given by the Father ● Give eternal life ● Hold possession of sheep, will not perish ● Father & Shepherd are ONE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Climb in by another way ● Thief & Robber ● Voice is NOT recognized ● Zechariah 10:2
<p>Characteristics of His Sheep</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follow Shepherd ● Know His Voice ● Will not follow stranger ● But FLEE from stranger ● Do not know voice of stranger ● Do not Listen to others ● May not be of His fold yet, but will know/listen to HIS VOICE ● Depend on Him for existence, survival and welfare 	<p>Not His Sheep (those that don't hear)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Led astray ● Eze 34:6 ● scattered

Week 7- Training For Tuning

Hello everyone. This week's sermon notes will be pretty simple. I'm including a segment of Dr. Wanda Walborn's book called *Spiritual Journey: Can I Really Get Close To God?* The portion that I'm including is called → *Nine Scriptural Tests For Hearing God's Voice*. I find that this is incredibly helpful in helping us to learn what God's voice says and what He would never say. This has been a huge help for me since Wanda has been one of the most influential leaders in my spiritual life. These tests are Biblically based and they work 100% of the time. I am including this so that you can read them and then infuse them into your normal everyday pursuit of God's voice. Enjoy!

Nine Scriptural Tests for Hearing God's Voice

These nine tests from the Bible help us determine if what we are hearing is from God.

Strength, Encouragement, Comfort

The first test asks the question, does the word we hear strengthen, encourage, and comfort us as I Corinthians 14:3 directs? Even a difficult word will accomplish these three things. Hearing we need to cut off a toxic relationship that impedes our relationship with God is the Lord. We know deep down that the relationship is not healthy, but we've conveniently ignored all signs and stayed in it. The Lord has now made it clear to us that we need to cut off the relationship, and we are strengthened, encouraged, and comforted to know that God will be with us as we walk it out.

Agreement with Scripture

The second test asks the question, is the word we hear in agreement with Scripture? "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2nd Timothy. 3:16a). The Scripture is a primary way in which God speaks, so anything outside it must align the word of God. This does not mean that every word can have a chapter and verse to back it, but the ways of God are also seen throughout Scripture so there is understanding and guidance of God through the overarching themes of Scripture. God will not tell a person to do something that is opposed to His written Word, because God doesn't contradict Himself.

Exalt Jesus

The third test for God's voice is does this word exalt Jesus? In John 16:14, Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit when He says, "14 He (The Holy Spirit) will glorify me (Jesus), for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." Jesus goes on to say that "all that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you" (John 16:15). The purpose of relationship with God is to hear his words-words are from the Holy Spirit to exalt Jesus for the glory of the Father. Revelation 19:10 reads, "For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus."

Good Fruit

The fourth test is, does the word have good fruit? We will never know the outcome until we act on what we hear. It isn't enough just to hear it. Hearing and obedience go hand in hand. It takes trust that what you are hearing is from God. Then it takes faith to apply that to your own life or speak it out to someone else. Luke 11:11-13 reads, "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you, then though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" God is not going to give us something to hurt us, so we can trust Him in the process. We must learn what God sounds like, and one of the ways we can tell it is Him is by the fruit that is produced. Is it good fruit or bad fruit? Does a person feel loved by God, or do they feel judged, belittled, criticized, or hopeless?

Accurate Prediction

The fifth scriptural test for God's voice is if the word predicts a future event, does the event happen? Deuteronomy 18:22 reads, "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him. It is important that a person is both credible and accurate. 1st Thessalonians 5:19-21 cautions the reader by saying, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good." Not every single word given will be 100 percent accurate 100 percent of the time, because we are fallible human beings; however, that doesn't mean we should throw out all prophecies, quench the Spirit's fire, and despise all words. We need to test everything, so we hold on to the good, ponder what we have heard, and wait for the Lord to reveal more to us so over time, we can piece together what He is saying.

Turns You Toward or Away From God?

The sixth test for hearing God's voice is, are people turned toward God or away from Him? Deuteronomy 13:1-3a reads,

"If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, 'Let us follow other gods' (gods you have not known) 'and let us worship them,' you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer."

The voice of God will draw people to Himself, not to another human being. The apostle Paul extensively charged Timothy in 2nd Timothy 3:1-5 to beware of the following kinds of people:

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people."

Sometimes the person giving the word is simply immature. It is easy to ignore their word by judging their looks, their age, their experience, and even the delivery of the word itself; however, we need to be careful with this, because sometimes God offends our pride and gives the word to us through someone we don't like or respect. That doesn't mean the word is wrong

and we should reject it. We need to be wise and discerning and align the spoken word with the written words of God. The voice of God draws people to Himself.

Freedom or Bondage?

The seventh test for God's voice is does the word produce freedom or bondage? Paul wrote in Romans 8:14-16,

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

As a son or daughter, we have full rights and privileges of our father's inheritance. All that belongs to God now belongs to us too. "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). Paul warns the reader to stand firm and not let yourselves be burdened again. Staying free requires believing the truth about who we are and what we've been given—this is by grace through faith.

Life or Death?

The eight test for God's voice is, does the word produce life or death? The letter of the law produces death because of the impossibility to keep it. It is harsh, judgmental, and critical. The voice of God produces life to those who hear it, giving hope and healing to all who are willing to receive it. Jesus said, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The works I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life." (John 6:63)

Witness of Holy Spirit

The final test for God's voice is, does the Holy Spirit bear witness that the word is true? Jesus told his disciples, "When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13). This brings assurances to know that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth.

General Truths about how God's Voice differs from Satan's Voice

- So how do we know we are hearing God and not the enemy? The voice of our enemy, Satan, is a vague, condemning voice that leads to feeling shame and despair, and produces fear in us. The Bible is clear that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). The voice of the enemy is an accusing voice that taunts, harasses, and torments us. The convicting voice of the Holy Spirit is specific, is restorative, leads to repentance, gives hope, and produces love and peace. God's voice provides solutions and freedom. It is important to distinguish these voices, because many people attribute to God the voice of the accuser. That voice is NOT God! The voice of God always shows us the way out of trouble by the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit within us. Whether sitting alone to listen to God or listening when praying for a friend, faith and action are needed in the process. Humbly receive the word you heard, weigh it against Scripture, and then humbly and lovingly act on what you heard. In this way, you will figure out what the Lord sounds like. God will make himself heard. Wait for Him.

Week 8- Hearing God Brings Unity To The Church

What's up! I'm glad that you're checking out this week's sermon notes. Welcome!

The heart of this week's sermon focused around understanding that God calls us to also hear Him through community and not just as individuals. I will always pray that we are all developing deep, deep private lives with God, however, maturing in our pursuit of Jesus always leads us towards realizing that He's set this up to also be done together. I'm not sure I would trust too many believers who feel as though they have a lone wolf calling in life because I don't see Scripture leading us away from sharing our lives together. God points us towards the Church, not away from it.

In order to establish this big idea, I preached out of John 17 (which is called Jesus' High Priestly Prayer). We saw that this prayer takes place right before Jesus is taken and killed. In this prayer, Jesus asks for two main things...

1. Jesus asked the Father to Glorify Him→ While Glorify means A WHOLE LOT (more than we could ever cover here), at the most fundamental level Jesus is asking the Father to acknowledge him and the sacrifice that he was about to make.
2. Jesus asks the Father to keep both his current and future disciples "in his name" and to keep them One. He asks the Father to keep his disciples in unity, oneness, "perfectly one" (John 17:23).
 - a. Unity in the church is now one of the clearest signs to see if a church is listening to God. God's word calls us towards true Unity. Real Unity is only found in the Church and it is not something that the world has.

To continue to lay out the importance of pursuing this unity and to shed some light on what the Bible calls us to do, I (& Logos Bible Software→ Factbook on Unity) put together a pretty comprehensive list of passages along the theme of Unity As God's People. Go through this list and read through it. Go to the passages and investigate the life that God is calling you to live for yourself. I intentionally did not put the passages in this document because I want you to use your Bible and read the surrounding context. If you are hungry for community, you'll investigate this for yourself. If you are not hungry you won't and I promise you that you'll be missing out on a fuller life that God has for you because you are not rooted in the unity of the Church. Investigate and let me know if you would like to talk about any of these passages! Please Go and Check it Out!

Unity as God's people...

- is a distinguishing characteristic of God's people, which derives from their common relationship with God, and is expressed in commitment to one another, mutual concern, concerted action and harmony within the believing community. Living in unity with God's people includes the following...
 - Unity In A Common Relationship With God
 - As Children of God
 - Malachi 2:10

- As The People Of God
 - 1 Peter 2:9-10
- Unity In A Common Union With Christ
 - 1 Corinthians 10:16-17
- Unity Through Common Receiving Of The Holy Spirit
 - 1 Corinthians 12:13
- Unity In A Common Faith
 - Ephesians 4:4-6
- Expressions Of Unity Among God's People
 - Commitment To One Another
 - 1 Samuel 18:1-4, Ruth 1:16-17, 1 Thessalonians 2:8
 - Sharing Possessions
 - Acts 4:32
 - Giving Support
 - Joshua 22:3, Deuteronomy 3:18, Hebrews 10:24-25
 - Sharing Troubles
 - 2 Corinthians 1:7, Philippians 4:14, James 5
- Unity Expressed In Agreement With One Another
 - Living In Harmony
 - Psalm 133:1, Ephesians 4:3, 1 Peter 3:8
 - United In Purpose
 - Philippians 1:27
 - Of One Mind
 - 1 Corinthians 1:10
- Unity Expressed In Worshiping God Together
 - Romans 15:5-6
- Unity Marks Out God's People
 - John 17:21-23
 - John 13:34-35

Fellowship Among Believers...

- Fellowship with other believers is meant to help shape who you are and how you live your life. I'm a firm believer in our call to non-believers (Great Commission→ Matthew 28). You should 100% be living side by side with non-Christians. However, when we talk about the group of people who are called to help shape your life and worldview, the Bible reserves that space for God and His church. Real Christian fellowship includes...
 - Sharing In The Fellowship Of God's Love
 - 1 John 4:10-12
 - Sharing In The Fellowship Of A Common Devotional Life
 - Acts 2:42
 - Worshiping Together
 - Psalm 55:14
 - Praying Together
 - Acts 1:14

- Breaking Bread Together
 - 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 2 Peter 2:13, Jude 12
- True Fellowship Means Sharing With Those In Need
 - Hebrews 13:16
 - Showing Hospitality
 - Romans 12:13
 - Sharing Money & Possessions
 - Deuteronomy 15:10-11, Acts 2:44-45
- Strengthening One Another In Fellowship Together
 - Bearing With The Weak
 - Galatians 6:1-2
 - Strengthening The Weak
 - Isaiah 35:3-4
 - Encouraging One Another
 - Hebrews 10:24-25
 - Putting The Needs Of Others First
 - Romans 15:2
- True Fellowship Means Living In Harmony
 - 1 Peter 3:8
 - Showing Equal Concern For All
 - Acts 10:34, 1 Corinthians 12:25, James 2:1-4
 - Examples Of Failure To Exhibit True Fellowship
 - 1 Samuel 30:22, 1 Corinthians 1:11-12, 1 Corinthians 11:17-22

Unity and Fellowship of Church

- The church is one in essence, because it is founded on one gospel, united to one Lord and indwelt by one Spirit. Its unity is under constant threat because of the tendency to division that is inherent in fallen humanity, and needs to be continually maintained and actively expressed in fellowship.
 - The Unity Of The Church
 - The Church Is One
 - Romans 12:5
 - The Church Transcends All Barriers
 - Colossians 3:11
 - The church's Unity Reflects The Unity Within The Trinity
 - Ephesians 4:4-6
 - The Church's Unity Is The Work Of The Trinity
 - Ephesians 2:16-18
 - The Purpose Of The Church's Unity
 - To Lead Others To Faith
 - John 17:23
 - To Lead Believers To Maturity
 - Ephesians 4:13
 - The Nature Of The Church's Unity

- Philippians 2:1-2
- Appeals For Unity In The Church
 - Ephesians 4:3
- The Church's Unity Is Expressed In Fellowship
 - Fellowship With God
 - 1 Corinthians 1:9, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Philippians 2:1, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 1:3, 1 John 1:6-7
 - Fellowship Expressed By Meeting Together
 - Acts 2:46
 - Fellowship Expressed Through Sharing Resources
 - Acts 2:44-45
 - Fellowship Through Suffering
 - Revelation 1:9, Romans 8:17
 - Fellowship Through Shared Spiritual Blessings
 - 1 Corinthians 9:23
- Specific Actions Which Express Fellowship And Unity In The Church
 - Sharing In The Lord's Supper
 - 1 Corinthians 10:16-17
 - Baptism As An Expression Of Unity
 - Ephesians 4:4-6
 - Extending Hospitality
 - Acts 28:7, Romans 12:13, 1 Timothy 5:10, Titus 1:8
 - Greeting One Another
 - Acts 18:27, Romans 16:3-16
 - Welcoming Former Opponents
 - Acts 9:26-27, Galatians 2:9, 2 Corinthians 2:5-8
- Divisions In The Church
 - Causes Of Divisions In The NT Church
 - Personal Ambition
 - Mark 9:34, Mark 10:35-41
 - Ethnic Tensions
 - Acts 6:1
 - Differences Of Opinion
 - Acts 15:37-40, Philippians 4:2
 - Troublesome Heretical Leaders
 - Romans 16:17, Jude 19
 - Partisan spirit
 - 1 Corinthians 1:11-12, 1 Corinthians 3:3-4
 - Greed
 - 1 Corinthians 11:18, 1 Corinthians 11:20-21, James 4:1-3
 - Warning Against Division In The Church
 - 1 Corinthians 1:10
 - Acceptable Differences In The Church

- In secondary matters of conscience, Christians are to respect rather than judge each other. These things need not impair the essential unity that is in Christ
 - Romans 14:1-3, Romans 14:5-6, 1 Corinthians 8:9-13
- In Varieties Of Spiritual Gifts
 - 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 1 Corinthians 12:14-25, Galatians 2:7
- Necessary Divisions In The Church
 - Between The True Gospel And Heretical Alternatives
 - Between Those Truly Committed To Jesus Christ, And Those Apparently Part Of The Church But Living In Sinful Lives
 - Over Essential Gospel Principles
 - Acts 15:2, Acts 15:5-6, Acts 15:19, Galatians 2:11

Week 9- Saved Through Hearing

We made it through another sermon series and I really pray that it was meaningful to you. I haven't been shy about expressing the importance of this topic. I pray that through our words you heard God speak to you and that you have been given a fuller picture of Biblical narrative. Hearing God holds such an important and prevalent place throughout the entire Biblical narrative and I pray that you have eyes to see how often God directs us to hear Him. Hearing God is central to the Christian way of living and it is what we've been made to do!

I wanted to close our sermon notes by summarizing some of the most important things from this series so that we can be reminded of where we've invested ourselves in. Once again, I pray that this has served you in your spiritual walk! Now it's up to you to take this and put it all into practice.

Definition of Hearing God

- **Tuning our attention** towards God so that we are ready at all times to **Capture**, **Remember** and **Act** on what God is saying.

Quote I enjoyed→ “The primary organ for receiving God's revelation is not the eye that sees but rather the ear that hears—which means that all of our reading of Scripture must develop into a hearing of the word of God.” (Eugene Peterson, Eat This Book)

Plan

1. A God Who Hears & Speaks, A Humanity that Hears & Speaks
 - Genesis 1-2
 - We hear God because He is a God Who Speaks. We speak with God because He cares to listen. Hearing God ***IS*** the design to life that God set up. Even if we don't understand why He would care so much, the story of the Bible is that He chooses to! Every single person has been made to hear & speak with Him.
2. The Human Template: Abraham
 - Genesis 12, Genesis 16- Hagar & Ishmael, Genesis 22
 - I believe that the most central message that we are meant to learn from Abraham's life is that we are meant to be people who follow God's voice. Through Abraham's life we see this one consistent lesson→ God is the one who Sees and We are the ones who Hear. God sees everything and speaks to us about what we need to know & where we need to go.
3. To Hear is to Obey
 - Primary- Jonah (whole book)
 - i. Other Interesting Passages→ Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 13:4, Psalm 115:6
 - The Biblical understanding of Hearing God cannot be preached without acknowledging that obedience is non-negotiable. Hearing God is not just being receptive to His voice, plenty of people hear and never care to obey. Hearing Him and not obeying what He said is a mark of someone who is not actually listening.

To Hear God is to Obey. The Hebrew word Shema is the most consistent word on this topic and it is the verb “to hear” AND “to obey” because there is no distinction in the Biblical worldview. To Hear God is to Obey Him.

4. The Only God Who Hears

- Primary- 1 Kings 18
 - i. Other Interesting Passages→ Deuteronomy 4:28, Daniel 5:23, Psalm 115:2-8, 1 Samuel 5:1-12
- We looked at when Elijah called the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel. The context of the faceoff was simple. Both sides would set up an altar and the God that responded and acted would be the winner. I used this story because I think it does an amazing job at summarizing one of God’s overarching critiques to our idol worship. God consistently personifies our trust in idols by saying that when we worship things that are not Him, we worship and turn to things that cannot hear us. Only Yahweh hears and speaks to all. Only Yahweh responds in this world. Yahweh is the only God who is active. He’s the only God who hears. Idols cannot hear you so don’t trust in them or expect them to do any good.

5. Jesus, The Word of God

- Primary- John 1:1-18
 - i. Other Interesting Passages→ Hebrews 1:1-3, Ephesians 1:3-4
- The Holy Spirit inspired the gospel of John to introduce Jesus in a very different and specific way. It stands out from the other gospels and begins to tell the world about Jesus by describing Him as God’s Eternal Word. This Word has always been with God and is also, Himself, God. This Word came and manifested the invisible God and becomes God’s clearest way of speaking to the world. In Jesus we hear God because He was God. In a series about Hearing God we point to Jesus who was God’s words and who taught us God’s words.

6. Jesus, The Shepherd Worth Listening To

- John 10
- It is not a coincidence that when Jesus talks about an abundant life He also speaks about Hearing God. In John 10 Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd. The only Shepherd who can perfectly care for the flock. The Shepherd who calls his sheep by name. Jesus also says that His sheep know his voice and runs away from strangers. Jesus’ sheep know His voice and love it.

7. Hearing God- Training For Turning

- Matthew 11:2-6
- In Matthew 11 John the Baptist sends some of his disciples to see if Jesus could be the promised messiah. When they ask Jesus, his response to them is simple, “Go and tell John what you hear and see...” When we look at Jesus what do we see? The Kingdom at work. People are healed because it was the Messiah’s Rite to heal. Jesus’ ability to heal our physical bodies is a demonstration of how He could heal our souls. Jesus’ ability to heal the deaf is part of his Messianic Rite. He healed our ability to Hear the Father.

8. Hearing God Brings Unity To The Church

- John 17
 - Right before Jesus faces the cross he leads his disciples through the Passover meal. To end the meal he prays and they witness what we call Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. In this prayer He asks for two things. The first is that He asks the Father to Glorify (acknowledge) what he was about to go through. The second is that He asks the Father to bring Unity to the church. If we are people who are hearing God, we will partake in what we've heard Jesus pray over the church, unity. Unity is not promised to the world, it belongs to the church.
9. Saved Through Hearing
- Deuteronomy 30:11-20, Romans 10:4-17
 - To close our series I wanted to remind us that hearing God is not an impossible task. Both passages remind us that hearing God is what we've been made for. Hearing God can be normal because He speaks and hears and has made us to do the same. Both Deuteronomy and Romans say→ *The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.* God has brought us His Word and His words in Jesus and we can know them and be saved by them!
 - I also wanted to remind us of this→ Romans 10:17- "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." If you've heard God's Word and have confessed Jesus as Lord then your words can contribute to someone else finding eternity. Hearing God also includes learning that our words carry the Kingdom in them. When we share the Gospel we become dependent on hearing God. Share the gospel and you'll hear God speaking to you!

We will be taking a few weeks to take a look at the topic of Stewardship but our next major sermon series will look into→ Speaking Jesus. We're very excited about this.