

What Did You Say?

“Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear. ~ Jesus

Perhaps one of the least appreciated senses that God gave us is the gift of hearing. The sounds of the birds, the animals, and the wind are too seldom heard in our increasingly urban world. The words that people say, and the meaning behind them are too often lost in the rush to the next destination. And hearing God’s voice, that most important of all communications? Don’t get me started.

There is a great difference between hearing and listening. We can hear sounds all day long, but be thinking of something else. Construction sounds, the church chimes, people talking, television or computer words and sounds.

Actor Marlee Matlin, an actor who lost her hearing years ago, says” I hope I inspire people who hear. Hearing people have the ability to remove barriers that prevent deaf people from achieving their dreams.”

Think of the sounds that have made the most impact on you. Actor Judd Nelson says, “The movie that’s had the most effect on me is Jaws. To this day when I’m in the ocean, I’m hearing that music.”

That sound which captures the attack of a giant marauding shark is in the memory banks of any of us who have heard it. “Da-dump! Da-dump! Da-dump! Da-dump!” Just before the shark strikes, we hear nothing. Silence.

We must appreciate God’s gift of hearing, and listen to those who cannot, either physically or spiritually. We can help to relieve impairments to those who cannot hear the same sounds we often take for granted. And, we can help those who are not hearing God’s voice to be able to hear the same things we do.

As I get older, I appreciate closed captions on the television, and am twice blessed by the words that come forth by listening and seeing at the same time. Even then, I am too often distracted.

We can listen to what is going on in the political world, for example, and hear all kinds of things. The common thought among many is that many of the powerful do not listen to us. “Money and corruption are ruining the land, crooked politicians betray the working man, pocketing the profits and treating us like sheep, and we’re tired of hearing promises that we know they’ll never keep.” The author of that thought is an English Musician named Ray Davies, but it could apply in any country, and often does in the USA.

There are also stories of redemption and unity. There are lives being improved by people who truly understand what it means to love God and neighbor. The competing voices in our world are many, and sometimes tend to drown each other out. They must be reported, read, and heard to see the tremendous good which happens on a daily basis.

The key to finding the right one to listen to and the best voice to hear, is to listen to God. God speaks the words which are never wrong. God calls us to think about others first. God speaks words of unity, healing, and salvation.

Young Samuel, who was serving as a sort of apprentice in the Jewish temple centuries ago, heard God speaking to him in the night, but did not know who it was. He finally asked Eli the priest, who urged him to respond. The scripture tells it best. "And the Lord came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears." 1 Samuel 3:10

When Saul of Tarsus was in the middle of his Damascus Road Experience, he heard Jesus speaking clearly, commanding to go to a certain address. Everyone else thought it was thunder.

We must hear the voice of God calling us away from the world, which distracts, confuses, and has temporal values, to things of a heavenly nature. God often says, "Slow down." He says, "be still and know that I am God." And very clearly, and most might hear but not move on to listening, "Follow me and be my disciples." Or, "Take up your net and follow me.

Sometimes we spend so much time thinking about what our net is that we forget we are supposed to pick it up and go out to do the kind of fishing only God makes possible. The kind which saves souls.

If we really really hear, we can actually hear the need behind the moment. "The most important thing in communication," writes Peter Drucker, "is hearing what isn't said."

So dear reader, be a hearer. But more than that, actually listen. To family, friends, people you never met before, and even those with whom you disagree. To God, with your family in church hearing the most important things ever said or done. For true listening, which only God makes possible, begins then.