

Luke 8:16-21 Listen and Obey

Sitting in his seat, the man placed a call from his flight and when he couldn't reach his wife, he called 911 - from an airplane! It was odd of course to make this kind of call, but the operator on the other end was cool and collected. For several minutes they talked. They talked about life, they talked about this man's love for his family. They even spent some time praying together. He recited the Lord's Prayer and Psalm 23 from memory. But then it happened.

The operator heard a bit of background noise, then heard her new friend say, "OK. It's time. Let's Roll!" What followed was a great commotion and chaos. Unbeknownst to the operator, her friend Todd and several others were on a dangerous mission. On that day, several passengers, with no prior connection joined efforts courageously and overtook the captors of their plane.

Though there is a tragic ending in this story, the courageous act of Todd Beamer and others on United Flight #93 served as a great sacrifice for the greater good. They knew, even in taking the plane down, they were preventing the destructive outcome planned by terrorist pilots who hijacked the plane and guided it toward Washington, DC.

Today, in Shanksville, Pennsylvania there are memorials in the field where the plane crashed. This is where for a few brave moments, courageous individuals risked it all and had a significant impact during 9/11. They were the first "soldiers" fighting back against the Taliban in a battle that began in Manhattan and moved to caves and towns of Afghanistan.

Of course, the American story of independence and freedom is full of such stories. Stories of brave men and women who were willing to give themselves for a higher purpose. To live courageously in support of a belief - an ideal. Whether we remember the streets of Lexington and Concord, the shores of Tripoli, the beaches of Normandy, or the all flagged hill of Iwo Jima - we know our independence has come with a price.

Todd Beamer was not the greatest hero, but his story is close to my heart. I was a teacher at Wheaton Academy the day the first planes flew into the twin towers. By the end of that day, Wheaton Academy knew it had lost one of its own - years earlier, Todd Beamer had been a student at Wheaton Academy.

We learned about his life of faith and willingness to do whatever was necessary to do the right thing. He called out "Let's Roll" and then moved in decisive action. I could not help ask myself the question - am I willing to do the right things in life, regardless of risk - do I obediently follow in the path God puts before me.

Am I living out my faith in a way that is bold and willing to sacrifice in pursuing God's greatest good and plan for my life? This is the question that I think is important for all of us to consider - **how well do we listen and obey Christ's instruction and call on our life?**

Consider the passage found in Luke 8:16-21.

No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. Therefore, consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him.

Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you."

He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

Today we will zoom in on the passage from a distance - first looking at context, then getting the main ideas, finally looking at the individual verses. I will conclude with two application for our lives.

In our last sermon from Luke, Wyeth Duncan discussed the parable of the sower and the seed. He helped us understand that this passage lays out four soils asking us to consider - which soil we represent? The seed of course was the word of God and at issue is how we respond. This passage provides the context for today's lesson. I want to make four context observations.

Overall, from this parable four things take place:

1. We are told to consider our own soil - how do we respond to the Word of God

What is the soil of our heart?

The trampled soil - unreceptive to the seed which the birds then ate.

The rocky soil - promising at first, but soil so shallow the plant withers.

The thorny soil - seemingly good, but surrounded by weeds that destroy the plant.

The good soil - plant grows up and yields a crop that is 100 times more than what was sown.

2. We are shown the value of parables - relating Kingdom mysteries to every day ideas. Even today, some of our most valuable teaching comes through parables which help unlock our understanding.

3. We discover some teaching remains hidden for those who don't seek or listen closely. Therefore, there are some who receive the parable, but never actually get it.

"though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand." They are hearing the words, but not thinking about the meaning and therefore, they miss out completely on what God may want to show.

4. The parable asks about soil, but is truly about hearing. Look at the passage again focusing on Luke 8:8b-15. The word hear or hearing is used seven times in the parable.

“He who has ears to HEAR, let him HEAR...”

“Though seeing, they may not see; though HEARING, they may not understand...”

“Those along the path are the ones who HEAR...”

“Those on the rocks are the ones who receive the word with joy when they HEAR it...”

“The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who HEAR...”

“But the good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who HEAR the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a good crop.”

When we approach today’s passage, it is important that we don’t approach it as if it is a week later (i.e. the next weekend, or two), rather this is truly connected to the words before it. Jesus develops the theme of hearing today and points that his goal is to reveal himself to those who are careful listeners and willing to obey.

Having looked at the context, let’s zoom in on the two key verses. When we look at these verses alone, I think they help us see clearly the primary intent of the two paragraphs.

“Therefore, consider carefully how you listen.” Jesus builds on the parable of the seed and the sower, by now warning us not just to HEAR, but to be careful how we listen. Which soil are you? Be careful. If we are not listening with a heart as good soil, this is dangerous.

To make his point clearer about what good listening is, he says, “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word AND put it into practice.” We learn that good listening is not simply about the functioning of our ears - but it is also the functioning of our heart and will. The key once again is that we LISTEN AND OBEY.

Francis Chan is a pastor who approaches this topic in a humorous way. He makes a point first talking about the children’s game, Simon Says and then thinking about his daughter.

You have likely played Simon Says. It is a simple game really. Simon says, “touch your nose” and you touch your nose. Simon says, “jump up and down” and you jump up and down. The question is why don’t we play Jesus Says. For some reason we find ourselves, listening, discussing, reading, studying deeper, but not simply doing or obeying what Jesus has invited us to do.

Imagine if I asked my daughter to clean her room (hypothetically of course, because it would always be wonderfully clean.) Suppose she came back to me later and said, dad, “I thought about what you said - in fact I memorized it, “you said...Annie, clean your room.” Even more, I want you to know I even learned how to say it in the original Greek. Later, I have some of my friends coming over and we agreed we would talk about the merits of a clean room. We would then talk about what are some of the ways a room could be cleaned. Finally, our plan is to pray that we will all have cleaner rooms.

You know this is ridiculous. What I wanted was a clean room. Jesus and God’s Word have given examples to follow and commands to heed and yet we Study and Discuss when he has asked us to Listen and Obey.

- Go and make disciples of all nations

- Rejoice always and pray without ceasing
- Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds
- Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly
- Approach the throne of grace with confidence
- Be still and know that I am God
- Remember the Sabbath and Keep it Holy
- Confess and find God faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse our unrighteousness
- Obey my commands and remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands
- Love God and love your neighbor as yourself

Why seek the nuances of what Christ may want us to do, when the flow of much of his teaching, even in these ten commands can guide us in much of life. Be faithful to following what we already know and allow God to show us refinements and next steps as we move forth in these. The heart of today's passage is to LISTEN AND OBEY.

Now let's dive deeper in to the passage and discover more about what careful listening is. There are three examples of careful listening to consider.

No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light.

There are two important aspects of this first statement. The first is that Christ does not want to be misunderstood in the last passage. Some might say, Jesus teaches in parables SO THAT some won't understand spiritual truth. Here Jesus continues the thought saying, my goal is to reveal truth, to bring understanding - I have lit a lamp and I will let it shine to be seen.

The second part of this is the continuing thought that we are also the bearers of the light and should live in a way that God's goodness and light are displayed. Matthew 5 says that we are to be salt and light in the world - there should be a positive impact in our life. Paul writes in Philip-pians that we are to shine as stars. There is a sense in which our life is meant to stand out in relief from the general culture. In Romans 12 Paul says, we are not to be conformed by the ways of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind. There is a very true sense in which we are in the world, but not of the world - rather we stand out and have an impact.

As a church, we hold the goal to proclaim the good news and engage in good works that we might both stand for the truth and make an impact.

We are to LIVE IN LIGHT. Careful listening will - LIVE IN LIGHT.

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Reading on... For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.

We learn here that not only is Jesus seeking to reveal the secrets of the Kingdom, but he wants us to understand, in time all will be made known. We are to align with the truth, because in time the truth will be made known. It may seem easier to align with popular opinion or the current culture. But beware - truth will be made known. It may be easier to live a lie and pretend about our

faith - but beware, all will be made known. There will come a time of reckoning - a time when we will be held to account - it will be most wise to live our lives according to what is true.

We are to LIVE IN TRUTH. Careful hearing will - LIVE IN TRUTH.

If we claim to have fellowship with him, yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. (1John 1:6)

Luke 8:18 warns us to, "consider carefully how (we) listen."

Careful listening...

Understands Christ light of revelation and lives to show the light. (8:16)

Understands the Word of God as truth and lives according to truth. (8:17)

Finally...

Understands and responds to the Word of God with obedience. (8:21)

"My mother and brother are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

Once again we come to the key teaching of this passage. Those who are adopted into Christ's family...those who are most important to him, are those who are able not just to understand the truth, but are willing to obey the truth. This requires faith to trust that whatever God asks of us is according to a good and perfect plan. To believe that God in fact has a stronger understanding of what is best for us than we do. We need to release our desire to bring about our own best, and instead, we trust and accept that if we follow God's plan, we will also experience the best possible life. Remember, behind every negative command of God - there is a grand positive.

Why don't we worship other gods or idols - because they have no power to satisfy or fulfill.

Why don't we lie - because we end up in a web of deceit and are held captive to the lie we told.

Why don't we commit adultery - because the greatest sexual satisfaction is in the context of a loving marriage.

Why don't we hoard, steal, or allow greed - because there is great value in contentment, simplicity and peace.

The grand positives of faithfulness, truth, purity and contentment will pay great dividends in life.

When we obey God's commands we discover freedom and joy in this life.

Whatever God asks of us or desires from us - we are best off when we approach it with obedience. We are to LIVE IN OBEDIENCE. Careful hearing will - LIVE IN OBEDIENCE.

In response to all of this, there are two appropriate responses we can make in hearing the teaching. They both fall under the heading that faith is active.

The first appropriate response is to engage in active listening. "Consider carefully how you listen."

What does it mean to listen well. It is not simply to hear - but it is actually to move towards understanding. Many might read the bible. Many might listen to Christian radio. Many might listen

to a sermon. Many say prayers. But all of these are meaningless unless time is taken for understanding. Let's pause on a few.

How does a careful listener approach a sermon? They might get a good night sleep. Prepare for church early enough to be on time and not rushed. They would sit early and settle their heart and mind. They would get quiet and begin focusing on God - especially contemplating the words of the worship. They would bring a bible, a pen and a notebook to follow along and record intriguing thoughts. They would reflect on the sermon later in the day, or with others later in the week, maybe in a small group. Perhaps they would read the passage before coming to church, or again after church, trying to remember the main points. They would certainly listen with an open mind - willing to learn what the pastor has to say - even if they may have heard this before. They would avoid daydreaming, imagining lunch or preparing a to do list for later. That is good listening.

How does a good listener approach the bible - the Word of God? They would not try to read for volume, but for understanding. They would pause and re-read sections. They would take notes in the margins or underline key words. They would memorize important verses. They would read in a quiet place - but not staying in bed if they fall asleep or not reading in public if too easily distracted. They would try to read from all parts of God's word - not just Old and New Testament - but also some history, so poetry, some prophecy, some gospel and some letters. You would likely pray that God will reveal his truth and wisdom and that you will understand how to apply these truths to life.

How does a good "listener" pray? You would not talk the whole time, but listen. You don't simply ask for things, but you spend time worshipping God, giving thanks for who he is, giving thanks for his sovereignty and perfect love. You would take time to confess your ways, but also listening for God's re-assuring voice. You might bring a pen and notebook both to write interesting thoughts, prayer requests or to release your mind of distracting thoughts - these can be written in order to make sure you will remember them and not have to focus on them while praying. You can ask that God will reveal his wisdom and help you walk with him.

This is how you listen well - you pursue God in quiet focus, and seek his wisdom for life.

Be careful how you listen - are you doing more than just hearing - are you listening and understanding?

Of the two applications, one was to engage in Active Listening; the other is to practice Active Obedience. When you hear the direction of God, are you following it up by doing what he says. Are you actively obeying the leading, prompting and revelation of God. When we don't the warning is that God will eventually reveal less. When we are faithful with the things God shares, then he continues to make himself known. Some of you may have grown stale in your understanding and interest in the things of God. I would recommend you return to the things that God has already revealed in order to actively obey what you already know he wants in order to learn more about who God is and how he operates.

James puts it this way: *Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks*

like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it, he will be blessed in what he does.

In our church, we have tried to summarize active obedience into a handful of behaviors and activities which are vital to the Christian life.

We ask that those who are active in the church:

Worship regularly both in Sunday morning and in daily recognition of God's work and will.

Connect with others to be held accountable, and to receive love, and encouragement.

Grow over time in Christlikeness, especially through Scripture and prayer.

Serve in the church or community, with a life offered as a living sacrifice to others.

Share faith with others and finances with generosity towards the work in God's Kingdom.

Some have said we live in a motion-activated kingdom. Imagine the grocery store...you can't stand at the door and wait for it to open. NO. You begin to move to the door in faith. As you move, the door opens and the way is made clear. God's kingdom operates in this way. As we incorporate what we are learning, as we move towards God - his kingdom doors open up and we gain understanding.

Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. James 4:8.

As we listen actively we understand. As we obey God in what we are learning from him, more is understood. Our faith and our understanding grow deeper and deeper. If you have stalled out with God, it is possible that the next step is not to learn something new, rather it is to obey what you have heard.

There is a great line from the movie, "We Bought a Zoo." The hero of the story is played by Matt Damon. His character would explain that he isn't so much a hero as someone who learned to capitalize on :20 seconds of insane courage when needed. Sometimes the difference in life comes from being willing to find :20 seconds of insane courage. Thus he manages to ask a wonderful woman to marry him, begin a great career, or successfully purchase and turn-around a failing zoo.

I would ask you - what would you do with :20 seconds of insane courage?

Would you storm the Taliban pilots?

Would you sign up to volunteer in the Lighthouse program?

Would you believe the claims about God's love for you and Jesus sacrifice for your sins?

Would you sign up for baptism?

Turn in a resignation letter? Donate to a worthy cause? Sign up for a marathon? Give her an engagement ring? Go on a mission trip?

Perhaps what you need is not something new to learn - perhaps you need :20 seconds of insane courage to believe that when you step out, God will be faithful.

That brings me back to where we started.

Todd Beamer was a Patriotic Hero. But I don't think it was his love of America that moved him (though I believe he does love America.) I believe it was a consistent life of faith and actively believing that God would reward obedience.

You see, more important to Todd than being an American citizen, is that Todd knew he was a citizen of Heaven. That is the strongest and longest lasting citizenship most of us will have. Thus it is our primary citizenship. We are citizens of heaven.

So what is true Patriotism. Patriotism comes from the root - Pater or Father. It means "Our Father's Land." A true Patriot, honors our True Father and His Land. We support the growth of the Kingdom of God. We may love our country, but the true patriot longs for God's Kingdom to come.

There is of course great enthusiasm and emotion flowing from our American roots. We see it in the Olympics, with the National Anthem before a Hawks game, in the World Cup and in every local parade we saw these last few days. But what if the flag we really waved, was the flag of heaven? What if the pride we really had was in the amazing fact that we are adopted by God in heaven? Not only do we recognize a better citizenship - an eternal one, but we are motivated to a truer patriotism that carries us to stand up for eternity, truth, and love. What if we saluted, waved, proudly understood who we are and what we stand for?

We actively give thanks, we worship, we serve and love others. We stand up for the least, the last and the lost. Do you see how this could work? Do you get how we could be living for light, truth and obedience.

We are citizens of heaven.

We are Patriotic for our father's heart and concern.

And rather than celebrating Independence Day - we instead proclaim that we are fully dependent today. Apart from Him we can do nothing - but...

I can do all things through God who gives me strength.

I can live as a truly patriotic hero every day - we may not have the same call on our life as Todd Beamer had on his, but when it comes to loving, serving and following God, I have two words for you...

Let's Roll!

Todd Beamer Story

- call from his seat to wife then 911
- conversation about family, then Lord's Prayer and Ps 23
- Operator hears commotion - OK, it's time, Let's Roll
- Courageous act to overtake plane
- Tragic end for Todd Beamer and flight #93 - but prevented a worse outcome
- Shanksville has a memorial
- First soldiers vs. Taliban - Manhattan to Afghanistan

American Independence and Freedom

- Many stories of brave men and women
- Concord and Lexington
- Shores of Tripoli, Beaches of Normandy, flagged hill of Iwo Jima
- Independence comes with a price

Beamer and Wheaton Academy - would I be bold and listen well

- Let's Roll
- Good question - how well do we listen and obey Christ's instruction and call on our life?

Read the passage - Luke 8:16-21

Consider the passage found in Luke 8:16-21.

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Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you."

He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

Zooming In - starting with Context

- Follows Parable of the Soils - Wyeth (Trampled, Rocky, Weedy, Good) - Which are You?
- Provides Reason for Parables
- Clarifies Jesus' Revelation
- Continues theme of HEAR

Look at the passage again focusing on Luke 8:8b-15. The word hear or hearing is used seven times in the parable.

“He who has ears to HEAR, let him HEAR...”

“Though seeing, they may not see; though HEARING, they may not understand...”

“Those along the path are the ones who HEAR...”

“Those on the rocks are the ones who receive the word with joy when they HEAR it...”

“The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who HEAR...”

“But the good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who HEAR the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a good crop.”

Jesus' teaching still echoes

Key Verses

- Therefore, consider carefully how you listen - v. 18
- “My brother and brothers are those who hear God’s word AND put it into practice - v. 21

LISTEN AND OBEY

Francis Chan, Simon Says, Clean Room

How Well Do You Do - Doing What Jesus Asks (Do you LISTEN AND OBEY)

- Go and make disciples of all nations
- Rejoice always and pray without ceasing
- Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds
- Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly
- Approach the throne of grace with confidence
- Be still and know that I am God
- Honor the Sabbath
- Confess and find God faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse our unrighteousness
- Obey my commands and remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands
- Love God and love your neighbor as yourself

Dive Deeper - to supporting verses

No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light.

Jesus Light - We are Light - LIVE IN LIGHT

- Matthew 5
- Philippians 2
- Romans 12
- 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Revealing Truth - LIVE IN TRUTH

For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.

- *Align with TRUTH - not popular culture*
- *Live Honestly with Self and with others*

If we claim to have fellowship with him, yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. (1John 1:6)

Luke 8:18 warns us to, "consider carefully how (we) listen."

Careful listening...

Understands Christ light of revelation and lives to show the light. (8:16)

Understands the Word of God as truth and lives according to truth. (8:17)

Finally...

Understands and responds to the Word of God with obedience. (8:21)

LIVE IN OBEDIENCE

"My mother and brother are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

Requires faith that trusts God's plan and work for us is better than our plan and work

Obeying is best - even restrictive Commands have grand positives

- Don't worship other gods or idols
- Don't lie
- Don't commit adultery
- Don't hoard, steal or become greedy - contentment, simplicity, peace

When we obey God's commands we discover freedom and joy in this life.

LIVE IN OBEDIENCE.

This leads to two applications:

- We thrive with **ACTIVE LISTENING**
- We grow with **ACTIVE OBEDIENCE**

Active Listening:

- Sermon - worship
- Scripture Reading
- Prayer

Are you listening well - are you listening and understanding?

Active Obedience:

When you hear the direction of God, are you following it up by doing what he says.

warning is that God will eventually reveal less.

grown stale in your understanding: return to the things that God has already revealed

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WCGSS

Motion- Activated

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:20 Seconds of Insane Courage

- Taliban Pilots
- Lighthouse
- Trust Life with Jesus
- Baptism
- Resignation Letter
- Donate Generously
- Marathon
- Engagement Ring
- Mission Trip

Perhaps what you need is not something new to learn - perhaps you need :20 seconds

Todd Beamer was a Patriotic Hero. But I don't think it was his love of America that moved him (though I believe he does love America.) I believe it was a consistent life of faith and actively believing that God would reward obedience.

- Citizen of Heaven
- True Patriotism - Father's Land
- American Pride is strong - Olympics, Hawks, World Cup, Parades
- Wave a New Flag as a new citizen, a new patriot and a new hero that LISTENS AND OBEYS
- We have celebrated INDEPENDENCE DAY with Great Excitement
- DEPENDENCE DAY

You see, more important to Todd than being an American citizen, is that Todd knew he was a citizen of Heaven. That is the strongest and longest lasting citizenship most of us will have. Thus it is our primary citizenship. We are citizens of heaven.

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