

## “Listen” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 13 – September 4, 2022

- I. **Deuteronomy 30:19-20** – “<sup>19</sup> Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, <sup>20</sup> loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice and holding fast to Him, for He is your life and length of days...”
- II. **Listen to my words!**
  - a. For many years I spent part of my day around the children in our early childcare center.
    - i. One of the phrases I heard all the time with teachers was, “Listen to my words.”
    - ii. Now, “listen to my words,” is a softer way of saying, “obey my commands!”
      1. We often use the word, “listen” to mean, “obey”.
  - b. For many people, the word obey is like fingernails on a chalkboard... it means that some authority has power over us, and sin has geared us to reject anything that rules over us.
    - i. It goes both ways in our government – as some in our country will not recognize the authority of a republican president – or currently some do not recognize the authority of the democratic president.
    - ii. Yet, this goes all the way back to childhood and the authority given to our parents to care for us and keep us safe.
  - c. The Fourth Commandment tells us, “You shall honor your father and mother.”
    - i. What does this mean? From Luther’s Small Catechism, “We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.”
    - ii. We honor the authority of our parents, and from the family unit of dad and mom, the authority is then entrusted to teachers, pastors, the government, and others to step in on behalf of the parents to do the right things in raising up the child.
    - iii. Moms and dads are so important because raising up children right starts in the home.
  - d. The truth is that we need to obey our parents – or listen to them – because the consequences can be serious!
    - i. Let’s just think about raising up our children and teaching them to listen or obey.
    - ii. I’ve known many parents who use different levels of discipline to instruct and keep them safe.
    - iii. We love our kids and want them to be safe and happy – which takes boundaries.

- iv. If our words are just a joke to our kids and we are screaming at them to watch out for a car coming at them... what happens?
    - 1. They don't hear or obey to their own detriment.
  - v. Again, not listening... not obeying can be disastrous – it can even be a matter of life or death.
- III. **Moses gives a summary** of the Israelite journey in the Book of Deuteronomy
- a. He starts out in chapter 1 at Mt. Horeb, or also known as Mt. Sinai, where the people were given the 10 Commandments... as Moses says were, “written with the finger of God...” (Deuteronomy 9:10)
    - i. Yet, the people did not trust God and His desire for them to go into the Promised Land, so He made them wander until that whole generation had passed away... which took forty years.
  - b. In the next chapters Moses goes through an extensive list of curses and blessings which result from disobeying or obeying God's commands...
    - i. The idea is to prepare them to go into the Promised Land with Joshua as their earthly leader and yet trusting in God alone... in other words, choosing life.
  - c. The sad thing about all this preparation is that God knows the trouble His chosen people will have listening to Him.
    - i. He tells Moses in chapter 31 – “[In the Promised Land] they will become prosperous, eat all the food they want, and become fat. But they will begin to worship other gods; they will despise Me and break My covenant” (Deuteronomy 31:20).
    - ii. No matter how many times God says, “Listen to My words!” – His people choose something else.
- IV. **Is it really a choice between life and death?**
- a. Yes, St Paul writes in Romans 6:23 that the compensation, or the payment we earn for sin is death.
    - i. This means that we choose death – not only dying in the natural world – but also rejecting and rebelling against God earns death spiritually too....
  - b. I want to be clear – a person either has faith in Jesus or not.
    - i. On the one hand, if you do not have faith in Jesus, here are His own words about the matter – “Whoever believes in [Me] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” (John 3:18)
    - ii. When a person has no faith, they cannot choose life or faith... they are dead in their trespasses... until they receive the free gift of grace through faith as the Holy Spirit brings that to them. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
    - iii. On the other hand, after God gives us this gift of faith... now it is possible to choose whether to follow God and His commands or not.

1. God gives us what we need to follow Him by the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), and yet, we often fail to listen to His words.
- iv. Moses' words are calling believers, or those with the gift of faith, to listen, or obey God... "Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice" (Deuteronomy 30:19-20)
- c. Unfortunately, we choose sin and death far too much as God's people.
  - i. Sometimes as your Pastor, I'm screaming for you to stop before you walk out into the road, but God's Word is ignored or cast aside.
  - ii. I don't have to go into a long list of ways that we choose sin (which leads to death) – because you have a great resource in the front cover of your blue hymnals, where you will find some questions about the 10 Commandments and how you are living your life.
    1. It's good to review God's will for our lives, because we can choose to listen and obey, or we can do what we want.
    2. Perhaps we don't know what God wants, but ignorance is not an excuse to break God's Law – and as His children, we should know what He wants for us.
- d. I suppose it boils down to trusting God... and even when we don't fully understand why, we know that He loves us and has our best interest at heart.

V. **God's love is truly the heart of the matter**

- a. The rest of Romans 6:23 goes like this – it starts with, "the wages of sin is death," and then it ends with, "but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
  - i. The free gift of grace by faith is beyond our efforts to do the right thing – and beyond our choosing!
  - ii. What I'm saying is that our salvation and forgiveness and life rest upon the work of Jesus on the cross and His victory over the grave.
  - iii. Jesus didn't say, "you pay the penalty... you earned it for your sinful life."
    1. Instead, Jesus looked upon us all with great compassion and love, opening His arms to us... on the cross.
    2. At His death, He received what we earned, and in return He offers us the forgiveness of our sin and life... eternal.
- b. I want you to consider the choice that Jesus made so that we are able to hear the voice of God speaking to us through the Scriptures.
  - i. Without Him opening the door for our faith and forgiveness, we could not hear the Lord, and certainly could not obey.
  - ii. Yet, with our saving grace as a guarantee, we are free to live out God's will – which is mainly trusting in Him and loving our neighbor.

- c. God's plan for you is to give you success and blessings as His child...
  - i. Listen to Him... yes that means obey... as you trust in God to deliver you.
  - ii. But remember why He wants these things – because He loves us with all His heart, and He knows what brings life. Amen.