

Quick to Hear  
A Message by Rev. Dr. Richard Lapehn  
First Presbyterian Church of Barberton: December 9, 2018

Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1-10; Luke 3:1-6

I. There are hundreds of times in the Bible when the followers of Christ are told to listen, to hear. Jim read the introduction to the ministry of John the Baptist. The entire ministry of John the Baptist was to instruct people to listen up, for the Son of God was coming soon.

Other examples of the command to listen include the following: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one,” Jesus said (Mark 12:29). “Be silent, O Israel, and hear. You have now become the people of the Lord your God. Obey the Lord your God and follow his commands and decrees that I give you today,” said Moses (Deut. 27:9,10).

The prophet Isaiah instructed, “Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken” (Isaiah 1:2).

In every instance in both the Old and New Testaments, God is never talking about the ability to hear. Rather, God is speaking to us about our desire to understand, appreciate, and act on the teachings we receive from the Lord.

Hear the words . . . yes . . . but then process their meaning, mull them over, contemplate their impact upon the discipleship you demonstrate to the world, and then commit yourself again to following their lead.

When we listen to God’s word and the teachings of our Lord, we must be willing to put away other distractions and pay attention to what it is that God’ Spirit is planting in our hearts.

II. In our multi-sensory world, there are many people who feel the need to multi-task, attempting to engage three or four different interactions, projects, assignment, or conversations all

at once. Some people seem to be able to accomplish several things simultaneously, while others cannot.

On October 21, 2009, Northwest Airlines Flight 188 departed San Diego, CA, for a non-stop flight to Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota. Northwest had been recently taken over by Delta and the pilot, Timothy Cheney, and co-pilot, Richard Cole, were unfamiliar with the new scheduling program used by Delta.

The two pilots took out their personal laptops and studied the new Delta program while the plane was on autopilot. There were a few radio calls from air traffic controllers that they ignored, but the plane was operating as intended on its course to Minneapolis-Saint Paul.

The pilots did not realize anything was wrong until a flight attendant called the flight deck asking when the plane would begin its descent into Minneapolis. It was only then that the pilots realized that they had been studying the program for over 90 minutes and have overflowed their destination by 150 miles.

They landed safely and no passengers were harmed. The National Transportation Safety Board investigated, however, and found both pilots guilty of being distracted and not paying attention to the task of flying the plane. They both lost their pilot licenses for allowing outside distractions onto the flight deck.

“I am much more competent when I multi-task,” we may be tempted to say. Regardless of our multi-tasking prowess, God asks for our full attention. How many things are distracting us when God wants us to hear what God is communicating to us?

III. Though we may physically hear the word of the Lord, the many distractions that capture our attention can keep us from fully embracing the word God wants to impress on our hearts.

In the OT story from 1 Samuel that I read, there is a little boy who keeps hearing a voice in his sleep. Samuel is under care of

the prophet Eli – an apprentice in temple work – when he hears a voice in his sleep call his name. He is still a boy, but he is learning to be a prophet/teacher/leader for Israel from the wise and respected teacher, Eli.

IV. The only qualifications necessary are your availability to be used by God and your commitment to follow God's prompting.

Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:38). Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit, the living water. The same Holy Spirit that conceived the miracle in Mary's womb indwells every devoted follower of Jesus.

God will bless our efforts as we follow the path of God's choosing. May we grow in faith and make ourselves available to become the miracle workers God wishes us to be. Amen.