

AndMaryheard His Word

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[0 : 00] Let us begin our time together around God's Word. We shall begin with a singing in Gaelic from Psalm 105.

You can read these words as we have them in English. Give thanks to God, call on his name, to men his deeds make known.

Sing ye to him, sing psalms, proclaim his wondrous works each one. See that ye in his holy name to glory to accord, and let the heart of everyone rejoice that seeks the Lord.

The Lord Almighty and his strength with steadfast hearts seek ye, his blessed and his gracious face seek ye continually. Think on the works that he hath done, which admiration breed, his wonder, and the judgments all which from his mouth proceed.

And so on. Psalm 105, from the beginning of the psalm. For verses o higuf, higuf po'jochus do'ye, her anamsen, gadefeen.

[1 : 17] Psalm 105, from the beginning of the psalm. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[3 : 54] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[6 : 24] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[8 : 54] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[12 : 24] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[14 : 54] May they be.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[18 : 24] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

And verse 38.

[21 : 24] And number two, fertile imagination as indeed many of you do, you will no doubt have pondered over the kind of setting that was before us here and how it actually worked out in practice. This evening however I'd like us to think of the words that we have read last year. Mary which also sat at Jesus's feet and heard his words, heard his word particularly and heard his word. We barely touched on this last Lord's Day, perhaps glossing over it in a couple of sentences, but I'd like us this evening to consider it in a little bit more depth. There are two or three things I want us to highlight from the text and from the scripture as a whole. First of all I want us to notice it is the hearing of Mary and necessarily the obedience of Mary. These two things come together and a brief word about what we hear which is the word of the Lord. These first two things are really two halves of the whole. We are told by scholars that in both Hebrew and Greek which is the languages of the

Old and New Testament that the verb to listen is related to the verb to obey. I want to make that known to you by citing a couple of examples from the scriptures so that you understand what is meant by it. First of all the words of the prophet Ezekiel.

In the prophecy we are reminded of a common problem throughout the ages which was that people often referred to the promises of God's blessing, believing that these promises were their right. And of course what they believed was true as far as it went, especially when it came to Israel who were God's chosen people. But what they failed to remember was that the promised blessings and the promised presence of the Lord in Israel hinged upon them honouring their covenant obligations. Failure on their part would bring upon them God's displeasure.

They would need to endure this displeasure until they repented of whatever sin or wrong action that they were guilty of that brought about that displeasure.

And the prophet's role in the experience of Ezekiel at this point was to bring about this repentance by reminding them of what God had to say to them.

[25 : 27] But as you will know, as is often the case, that people do not want to listen or hear the word. If you read in chapter 33 of this prophecy, you have these words, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord.

And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear my words, but they will not do them.

For with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness. Now he follows that statement with these words, And lo, the word unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument.

For they hear thy words, but they do them not. Now we have identified for us here the implicit truth, not only that we must hear the word, we must do what the word says.

Peter Naylor, in his comments on the prophecy, writes, It seems Ezekiel's hearers, Ezekiel, the prophet's hearers, treated the prophet in this way, switching off when he had hard things to say, and treating him as no more than an entertainment, when the performance was over, and when their ears had been tickled pleasurably.

[27 : 18] They would return to normal business. Ezekiel was a passing voice that men of sense would not allow to affect their lives.

Now that is something that should concern us all. Having heard what is the end result of what we have heard, we keep getting told that there is no lack of good preaching, and if indeed that is the case, what evidence do we have that it is being listened to?

If we look at the chapter in which we find our text, we have the account of the first missionary sent out by Christ. We have in the context the solemn word of warning given by the Lord concerning the rejection of his word, and his message of peace and healing.

Can I refer you to these solemn words? Chapter 10 And reading from verse 10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you.

Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.

[28 : 56] Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, yet a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes, but it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.

And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell. He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despises you, despises me, and he that despises me, despises him that sent me.

Jesus tells us in Matthew's Gospel, He that receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward.

And he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. But the teaching is plain. Those who come with the word of Christ are identified with him.

They are received because he is received. They are rejected because he is rejected. In the scripture and evidence of unbelief is the refuser to listen or to hear.

[30 : 16] We know from the words of the Apostle James, which we have read, that hearing and doing go hand in hand. Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.

If we only hear, he says, we are deceiving ourselves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man observing his face in the mirror.

For he observes himself, observing himself goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. We need to be aware that when we hear God's word, we are to listen with a measure of discernment.

What someone has described as a thoughtful receptiveness to the truth. Marcus Lone has a small book entitled Mary of Bethany.

In it, he describes the attitude of worship that marked Mary as she sat at the feet of Jesus. She sat at his feet, he says, as one whose sole business was to hear.

[31 : 25] And she drank in his words with all the thirst of eager delight. She was not just a casual hearer, like one whose heart was unmoved, or whose mind was far away.

She listened with the loyal spirit of ardent love, like one who gave heed to what she heard. Surely we should all know something of this, even if we are not sitting at the feet of Jesus, literally.

But this is where we get it badly wrong. God's servants speak the word of the Lord. Of course, they are mere men, and as men, they have many of the weaknesses of men.

But when they come with the Lord's word, it is the word of the Lord that is on their lips. Mary heard this word, and both, whoever we are, whether we're Mary, or those who read the word that is there before us concerning Mary, Mary, so should we.

Although I say it to you, I've often said it to you, I don't mind repeating it, because it bears repeating.

[32 : 54] In this present climate, the restrictions placed upon our worship, because of the pandemic, has been very damaging. How damaging, we may yet discover.

We are all creatures of habit, and some have habitually attended a place of worship over many years. And truth be told, it was habit that kept them coming.

Now that habit is broken, there is no certainty that it will resume, because other habits have formed. Sunday behind closed doors has become a day revolved around eating, drinking, and entertainment.

There's no doubt that we hear of a greater interest in the gospel, because there is more availability through the media of material that caters for all sorts of tastes, even religious tastes.

But for the Christian, there is a duty placed upon us all to hear what God is saying to us. And if that is by the way of YouTube, DVD, CD, tape, whatever, online, whichever way we come to hear it, that duty is ours, and we avail ourselves of it.

[34 : 17] But we need to reflect upon this, how we fulfil that duty, as members of congregations, as members of the body of Christ.

For example, we need to support our own minister. I'm not saying that as a fully paid up member of the minister's trade union, there isn't one, nor would I represent it as such, but as someone who needs to remind himself as well as others.

If we belong to our congregation, and a denomination, that should have first call upon our time and our prayers. In the first instance, because that is where he and his providence has placed us.

And secondly, if we subscribe to the Presbyterian form of church government, we were all involved in the election and call of our minister. we subscribed our name to his call and so doing promised all dutiful respect, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord.

Now that has to do with the word that they are to bring to you. And to us, whoever we are, it is his word by way of his servants to his people.

[35 : 32] And to recognise that would, and could be, more encouraging to those involved in it.

Nothing could be more encouragement. Bring more encouragement to them and to know that God's people appreciate what they are doing and why.

to recognise that in the wonderful providence of God we have been introduced to this providence under his hand.

We may query, we may question, we may argue that it is not a good providence but it is God's providence. But secondly, it is a privilege also to recognise that because of the nature of the pandemic we have been allowed to access a more extensive bank of preaching and preachers and that is a great privilege.

That is a wonderful thing. But both cases require us to remember that we have a duty before God to exercise discernment in who or what we are listening to.

[37 : 02] But if our choice takes us to someone and our confession is that the spiritual meat supplied is the best of fear and the needs of our souls are being amply met, we can at that moment remind ourselves that as James the apostle teaches we cannot be hearers only.

It is with a view to an end to be doers of the word. I have met many people over the years and they remind me of scientists picking away at a specimen on a petri dish.

They are interested in all kinds of things to do with the mechanics of a sermon or the manner in which the sermon is delivered, the text or the word that is studied, but it is always from an academic or a distance that is unhealthy.

And very often I have to say this that the worst culprits are ministers who need constantly to remind themselves that they are hearing God's word just like Mary was hearing God's word, sitting at the feet of Jesus with a view to worship and adore the Lord.

It is the most important thing we can do to listen to him. His word feeds us, his word guides us, his word keeps us.

[38 : 33] We may believe ourselves to belong to any category of believer whether that be reformed, evangelical, or whatever caliber of believer we believe ourselves to be.

But God in his mercy has brought us to hear his word. And when we hear his word, what we hear of it is something that will be held against us if we abuse the privilege that we have.

So I was preparing this, I was reminded of something and it saddened me at the time and it saddened me still. I remember probably a very sorrowful time in the experience of our church at the time of the division that occurred in about 2000.

and I was at the general assembly and I remember whatever digs I was in, I was walking along the street. It was the assembly in May time and it was a lovely spring morning and I saw somebody there and I didn't know him personally but I knew who he was and especially I knew his parents and they had been very good to me as a young Christian and I knew that his mother was widowed.

And I went to speak to this person who had the occasion to speak to him and I asked after his mother and he offered what was probably the word of rebuke.

[40 : 14] I don't know how he meant it but it certainly it was, it didn't, I didn't feel that it was the right response because he maintained that his mother at that time was broken hearted by the way the church was going which was probably the truth but there was no answer to my inquiry after her well-being.

Now the reason I mentioned that was many years after that, that same person, like so many others of any denomination unknown, he went astray and his confession of faith was, I don't know where he is today, I have no idea whether he's with the Lord back in this world or in the next world.

But it reminded me of how staunchly this person was standing for square on the church's reformed confession and the burden it was to his mother that that was being spurned or overlooked and there he was years after that, perhaps doing worse than that.

we are all to remind ourselves that we are under God's word and whenever we are under God's word it carries with it the burden of responsibility and we have that responsibility to avail ourselves of what Christ provides for us because he's speaking to our souls, he's speaking to the most precious thing that we possess.

and we cannot overlook it and we cannot ignore it and we have a duty to preserve in our hearts and in our minds because he desires for us that we would go on with him.

[42 : 28] Mary we are told in this passage sat at his feet and she she heard him heard him heard him no doubt with faith and no doubt with the desire to go on with him that's the way we should be that we hear not just for the present but for the future not just to enable us to enjoy the privilege for the moment but as something that sustains us in life until we take leave of this world whatever lies between us and the end it is this word of his from his mouth by whatever means he has ordained that is meant to secure us and to keep our feet in a troubled world and a world that has many torments for his people may he bless to us these few thoughts let us again bow our heads in prayer most merciful God we give thanks for your word and that you speak to us through it and that it is the voice of Christ that we should hear and that we should be sensitive to his presence here at this very moment watch over us and keep our feet free from falling our eyes free from tears grant to us mercy for our many sins in Jesus name and now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always Amen Amen