

# A Miracle Of Hearing

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[ 0 : 00 ] It's a great delight to talk to you, and I'm glad to welcome all of you here. And I would like to show you something, and I'm sure you won't be impressed, but I'm going to try it anyway.

I have in my hand a copper, and if you were to look at it closely, which indeed you may do, because I'll pass it around, you'll see that it's badly defaced.

Somebody's gone at it with a pair of pliers and tried to cut it in half, and they haven't exactly destroyed it. There it is. Now, you may think that that's just a copper that somebody's tried to wreck with a pair of pliers.

The truth of the matter is that I found it on a sidewalk as I left a home this afternoon. And in that home, I was introduced to a brand new baby boy, a relatively new baby boy, who had Down's syndrome.

And I heard the parents tell me of the shock it had been and the depression that they went into and how they have gradually come out of that depression.

[ 1 : 19 ] I mean, they came out fairly quickly, perhaps even too quickly. And they are so delighted with their special child. And they see in that special child, somebody who had to be, they were offered the opportunity of just leaving the child at the hospital and going home.

But they adamantly refused to do that. Now, as I was leaving the house and walking along the sidewalk, that copper caught my eye.

And I wasn't quite sure what it was, because as I say, and as you will see, it's slightly defaced. So I picked it up. And not being quite sure what it was, I put on my glasses.

And I looked at it closely. And I saw, yes, indeed, there was Her Majesty the Queen and the other insignia, which marked it as the coin of the realm.

Well, you see, there's a kind of connection between that baby, in which the parents suddenly recognized the image of God and the coin, which looked as though it was defaced.

[ 2 : 35 ] It might not be a coin at all. But definitely it is, in spite of the fact that it's slightly hammered up. Now, I would like to be very skeptical about that and say there is absolutely no connection between those two events, visiting that family with that baby and finding that coin.

And while I'm prepared to be skeptical about it, I'm quite prepared for you to be totally skeptical about it. And even to suggest that I've been drinking, it's not an inappropriate suggestion.

It came up in the second lesson tonight, too. So you see, it wouldn't be unusual to be caught with that. But for me, it was a kind of lovely confirmation of something that was just not very significant, perhaps.

But I guess I, in my own imagination, think that it was a sign from God. I really don't expect you to believe that.

I'm not even sure if I want to encourage you to believe that. But it's very helpful to me, because it was my experience. My experience may not be any help to you, except to encourage you to look for your experience and the way God might speak to you in what might appear to be the frivolous circumstances of your daily life.

[ 4 : 13 ] And I would like to tell you, just by way of introduction, but I'll get there in a minute, that it is the most dramatic and, to me, the most amazing kind of day-by-day reality of the great work of God in the ordinary lives of men.

I am just overwhelmed by it, day-by-day, as I see it. And I only get glimpses of it, I'm sure. And I think it's probably appropriate only to get glimpses of it for reasons that I want to tell you about.

Ah, no, but it really is quite amazing that you just discover in all sorts of circumstances, in all kinds of people, in all sorts of situations, you discover what must ultimately be, I am sure, the work of the kingdom.

The kingdom coming, we pray, might come. And you see it coming. You see the terrible power of it. The awesome power of the kingdom of God.

At work in the lives of very ordinary people. And I tell you that because I wish you could all see it. [ 5 : 50 ] I'm sure you do, probably. In fact, I'm sure you don't. But I think you have to learn to. And to come to the place where you do see it.

Where you recognize it. Where God is able to show you things that you might not at first see. And so that's a little bit of what I want to talk to you about.

The way I want to talk to you about it all is I want to take a verse from Acts chapter 2. And if you turn to that. And if you turn to that. And you should have your Bible in the ready position.

Because I want to flip around a little bit. And if you look at that. You will see that.

Verse 11 of chapter 2. We hear them telling in our own tongues.

[ 6 : 56 ] The mighty works of God. We hear them telling in our own tongues. The mighty works of God. Now, when I asked that good and noble lady who read the lesson tonight.

What the Acts lesson was about. She said, you know, it's the tongues passage from Acts 2. And I think most of us might well describe it as the tongues passage from Acts 2.

But I would like to suggest that there is at least one other way of describing it. And say, it's the passage in Acts 2 where people heard.

And I'm sure it would be entertaining at least. And perhaps informative and instructive. If you were all to come to the coffee hour afterwards. We had a long and profound discussion.

On the subject of whether the miracle was. In what the Galileans were saying. Or what the other people were hearing. It seems to me that you could make a fruitful discussion of that.

[ 8 : 08 ] The reason I think you could make a fruitful discussion. We could begin by looking at Genesis chapter 11. Where all were in one sense.

The background of this event starts. Genesis chapter 11. Is another chapter about tongues.

The. And it says. It's page 8 in your Bible. If you want to find it. And I do want you to find it. The whole earth had one language. And few words. And as men migrated from the east.

They found the plain in the land of Shinar. And settled there. And they said to one another. Come let us make bricks. And burn them thoroughly. And they had bricks for stone.

And bitumen for mortar. Then they said. Come let us build ourselves a city. And a tower with its top in the heavens. And let us make a name for ourselves. Lest we be scattered abroad.

[ 9 : 09 ] Upon the face of the whole earth. We're going to have an international exposition.

which in its scope and imagination. Is going to be so grand. As to attract the attention of the whole world. And that remote part of the Pacific Northwest.

Which people have been able to ignore. In centuries gone by. It will no longer be possible to ignore. Because we will build. Such a city. With a tower with its top in the heavens.

A great lighted globe. 17 stories high. And make a name for ourselves. So that throughout the whole world. We will.

People will speak of Vancouver. British Columbia. We must indeed do that. Lest we be scattered abroad. Upon the face of the whole earth.

[ 10 : 25 ] And lost. And nobody knows that we ever were. Well. That's how the human heart works. That's what the human heart understands. That's what we all do.

That's what we all contribute to. And take part in. The story goes on. And says. The Lord came down to see the city.

And the tower which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said. Behold. They are one people. They have all one language. And this is only the beginning of what they will do.

And nothing that they propose to do. Will now be impossible for them. Such has been the basic platform. Of every politician that's ever been elected in the history of democracy.

We will be one people. We will have one language. And there will be nothing impossible for us. That pride comes to the human heart so easily.

[ 11 : 26 ] And it's so terribly short sighted. The reason it's terribly short sighted. Derrick Kidner says in his commentary.

He talks about it as though. Unity and peace. Are the ultimate goals for man. There is something infinitely greater.

And that is a kingdom. Which is the kingdom of our God. And of his Christ. And it's an eternal kingdom. And we mustn't be allowed to sell that short.

With some earthly kingdom of our own imagining. And so in verse 7. Come let us go down. And there confuse their language. That they may not understand. One another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad. From there over the face of all the earth. And they left off. Building the city.

[ 12 : 25 ] And its name was called Babel. Because they. There the Lord confused the languages of the earth. The Lord scattered them abroad.

Across all the faces. The men were scattered. Because they no longer could understand each other. Do you all see those boats. That lie in English Bay. Day after day. Great and huge freighter. Do you know why they're there? It's all because of Union. Don't quote me and say that. But I. But I've heard that story so many times. Since I came to Vancouver. Yesterday I had the great privilege of having lunch with. A stevedore. A stevedore. A stevedore. A stevedore. A stevedore. Who belongs to the. Seaman's international union.

And so I said. Why are all those boats lying out there? Why are people sending them to Seattle to be unloaded?

[ 13 : 24 ] Why is the Vancouver waterfront practically dormant because of the lack of business? Of course I knew what his answer would be. I knew what it wouldn't be. I. I. I.

He didn't say it was unions. He said. It's Wall Street. I thought that was a lovely answer. Because I'm sure in the pubs along the waterfront, Wall Street gets discussed every night as being the essential problem of the Port of Vancouver.

And that I think is part of the confusion of tongues that people can't understand each other. They can't talk to each other. Their language has somehow been corrupted.

They cannot hear each other. It's a very difficult thing to do to be able to hear. And there's all sorts of people in this city.

And they can't hear. And I'm sure that the church can't hear the world outside. And I'm sure the world outside can't hear the church.

[ 14 : 31 ] And it's hard to know what it means. Look at Isaiah chapter 6, for instance.

You know, where that famous passage where, Whom shall I send and who will go for me? Then I said, Here am I. Send me. And he said, Go and say to this people, Hear and hear, but do not understand.

See and see, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people fat and their ears heavy, And shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their hearts, And turn and be healed.

It's a strange passage, But it's picked up over and over again In the New Testament. You might spend some time trying to figure out Why it's picked up over and over again In the New Testament. Why it would be That people wouldn't hear. Why so much of the Old Testament Is the writing of the prophets.

[ 15 : 38 ] And the prophets were those who stood up And said, Hear the word of the Lord. And the crowd stood up and stoned the prophets.

Because they didn't want to hear The word of the Lord. Why didn't they want to hear? Why wouldn't people want to hear The very thing on which Their whole life depended.

Why are they incapable of hearing? Why are we incapable of hearing? God speak to us. What happens?

That we are incapable of hearing. Well, You turn to Matthew 13 And you see You see several references there.

Look at 13:11, for instance. To you it has been given To know the secrets of the kingdom But to them it has not been given.

[ 16 : 47 ] They are not to know The secrets of the kingdom. Look in verse 19. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom And does not understand it The evil one comes and snatches away What is sown in his heart.

What was sown along the path. That's there as well. Look in Matthew 13, 15.

See those words from Isaiah again. This people's heart has grown dull And their ears are heavy of hearing And their eyes they have closed Lest they should perceive with their eyes And hear with their ears And understand with their heart.

You know, I mean There's a booming business In family counseling these days. And the reason there's a booming business In family counseling Is people can't hear each other. Husbands and wives Who have been living together For 20 years Communication has broken down So badly That they simply cannot hear each other. They can hear anybody else's husband or wife But they can't hear one another.

[ 18 : 07 ] One of the strange I guess Realities of sin Is our inability to Hear one another. And I I don't know What Why it should be I don't know I just know that it is It has come to be And Look in Romans 10-14 And I'm I'm just You should write all these passages down And go back to them And spend some time with them Studying this subject of How men come to hear But look at Look at Romans 10-14 Where it says How are men to call upon him In whom they have not believed And how are they to believe In whom of In him of whom they have never heard And how are they to hear Without a preacher And how can men preach Unless they are sent As it is written

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach Good news I must say that's one of my favorite passages I mean I love that reference To beautiful feet It's a magnificent passage It really isn't Just think about it for a moment It's generally considered One of the less beautiful aspects of people But the feet of him who brings good news Those are beautiful And they're beautiful because of The function they perform To bring good news To people To bring the good news That people may hear The mighty works of God Because it's hearing That's all important Look at Galatians chapter 3 And uh Where Paul

Lights into the Galatians Fairly vigorously And says Oh foolish Galatians Who has bewitched you Before whose eyes Jesus Christ Was publicly portrayed As crucified Let me ask you only this Did you receive The spirit By works of the law Or by hearing With faith Faith That to Romans Comes by hearing And hearing By the word of God So somehow There is A miracle That has to take place And that miracle Is what's spoken of As taking place In Acts Chapter 2 Suddenly The thing that people Have been looking for Happens And uh And there it is

It's Cretans and Arabians And if you go back It's a lovely catalog When you get older Catalogs probably get In your way now When you read them But when you get older You'll enjoy them And the tremendous This sort of range Of Parthians And Medes And Elamites And Mesopotamians And Judea And Cappadocia And Pontus And Asia And Phrygia And Pamphylia And Egypt And Libya The part of Libya Belonging to Cyrene And visitors from Rome Jews Proselytes Cretans And Arabians What a splendid array Of people You know If you had a parade Like that You'd think it was A coronation You know And I suppose In a way it was To have all those people Together in Jerusalem And all those people Heard

In their own tongue Mighty works of God Suddenly they heard Now I think hearing About the mighty works Of God Is somewhat like You know When there's an eclipse Of the sun And you're carefully warned Not to look directly at it Because you will blind yourself By doing this And I think hearing The mighty works of God Might render you Totally incapable Of living the rest of your life Here on this planet Because you would be In a transcendent ecstasy The amazing reality Of the kingdom Would make it impossible For you to survive In this cruel And sinful planet It would just be intolerable To you Once you'd seen that

[ 23 : 11 ] And so it's not An easy thing And even though The prophets declared it People didn't hear them And Christ said I speak in parables Lest they hear And understand And if they were to hear And understand Something would go wrong And I know That that's true now I mean I One of the dangers Of preaching the gospel Is people become useless Once they've heard it Simply because They become so absorbed With the reality of it That they They're not much Earthly good Any longer And so it's It's a strange thing That this is guarded Somehow This business of Hearing The works of God The mighty works of God Understanding who he is Now That's why I think It's important to read Acts chapter 2

In terms of A miracle of hearing And I'd like you to Perhaps spend some time Looking at Looking at that This week Looking at how How it is That you You hear this How you learn to hear I was reading It's always wise To throw in a reference To C.S. Lewis He's a universally Respective Kind of person But he was talking About reading poetry He says It's quite possible To read poetry Without having Any idea What the poet Is saying You just Put into the words What you want to hear And so It has that meaning For you And he says Lots of people Do that And he doesn't Deny them That they have The perfect right To do that They can read poetry That way

If they want He says That it's It's probably More enriching Though If you find out What the poet Has to say And I'm sure That lots of people Do that With scripture You have You know They have no idea What scripture says I mean The trouble With quoting John 3.16 To people Is that Quoting it You might think You know what it means And You probably Shouldn't quote it Without spending An hour Remembering what it means Before you lay it On somebody else Simply because You might just Give it with the Kind of superficial Meaning That your mind Gives to it And the meaning That is there In the heart And mind Of the Apostle John When he wrote it Is A tremendous Resource Of wealth And life To us So we should

Be careful We don't just Flip it off With the kind Of superficial Meaning That we give We should spend Time Hearing it Ourself And Letting people Know So That's what I'd like to Suggest to you Is An important Dimension Of Acts Chapter 2 That we hear Them telling In our own Tongues The mighty Works of God And to express To you My concern That you might Hear In your own Tongues Of the mighty Works of God Because I'm sure You speak A very peculiar Language Language You've learned In different Places In different Schools In different Philosophies I My wife Used to read

All the Catholic mystics For a period Of about Three years And she Spoke one Language Then Which Is very Interesting But now She's studying Family Counseling And she's Speaking Another Language A language In modern Psychology It's a Different Kind of Language And I'm Sure you Speak A language Which is Peculiar To you To your Own Educational Background To the Convictions And experiences Of your Own childhood The professional Training That you Have You speak A different Language The difficulty We have Is that we All think We speak English But that's A deception Because many Of us mean Very different Things And I'm Sure that Many have Never heard The gospel In their own Native Language They have Never been Able To hear That When they

[ 28 : 14 ] Hear it They say I heard All that Junk Before Which means They've Never heard It At all There's a Simple test That you Could apply To yourself If you Would like A little Test And Archie Imposed It on you Last week With a Certain Boldness Which Terrified me When he Asked you All to Turn And pray With one Another Getting Your tongue Around the Business of Praying publicly And openly Is a Very difficult Thing to do If you've Never done It Before Suddenly find That you Have nothing To say You don't Know how To use Your language To pray It's Difficult To come To grips With that And I You know I think That's A friend Of mine

Told me This week How A business Associate Of his Came To have Lunch With him And before They were Ten minutes Into his Lunch This Very Macho Man Was Weeping I Didn't Know how To talk To him I Didn't Know how To speak To him In his Language About the Thing which I Very much Wanted to Hear I was Afraid If I Used the Language Which I Didn't Know He Wouldn't Hear Because Somehow There Needs To be A Certain Miracle Of Grace By which We Do Hear The Mighty Works Of God In Our Own Lang And It Seems To me A Wonderful Thing That That Miracle Takes Place That Many Of You Could Probably Testify How You Heard And Heard And Heard And Heard And Heard All About Christianity Suddenly You Heard What Christianity Was About And You Heard It For The Very First Time Why Did You Hear At That Point What Were The Conditions That Made It Possible For You To Hear What Were The Conditions That Made It Possible For These People From All These Different Places To Hear In Their Own Native Language Their Own Native Tongue The Wonderful Works Of God And I You Know We We Pile Up Words You Know With Computers And Telephones And Telecommunication Systems And All

That Stuff The Paper Piles Up And The Words Pile Up And Up And Up And Up And Suddenly As You Walk Home At Night You Recognize Nobody Is Listening All The Words Are There But Nobody Is Listening Nobody Can Hear And Yeah I Think We Very Much Need The Holy Spirit To Move Among Us To Give Us Hearing To Give To People The Ability To Hear I Am I Think That's Terribly Important And I Think That's Something That Acts Two Should Convict Us About Suddenly Peculiar Time In History Suddenly People Hurd In

Their Own Dialog In Their Own Town They Hurd Who God Was And What He Was Doing Well I Leave It With You And Trust You Think Pray About It Let Me Pray