

Listen Up

I called last Sunday's message:
Speak Up.

We devoted our attention to the topics that arose from the George Floyd story, and the countless other stories that preceded it. Stories of injustice.

We heard from Carey and Shayn, and it was really good. If you missed it, this is one you should definitely go back and watch; you can find it on our website.

As a Biblical foundation, we rested on Proverbs 31:8,9

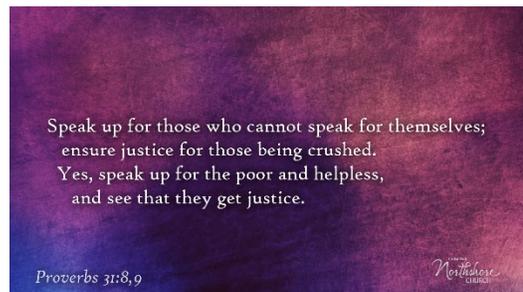
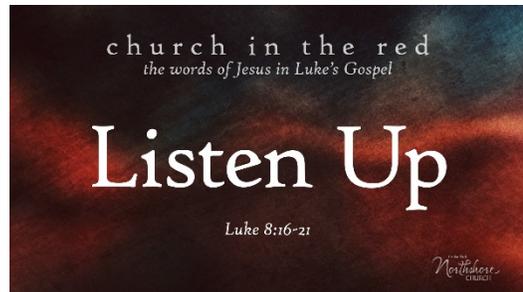
- ⁸ Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves;
ensure justice for those being crushed.
- ⁹ Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless,
and see that they get justice. ¹

Shayn and Carey encouraged us to speak up against injustice, against racism, systematic racism and police brutality... and to speak up ***for*** those we know and love and respect. And, even more importantly, we heard God's call from Scripture to ***speak up.***

Today we'll place ourselves back in our series that comes from the Words of Jesus in Luke... and I'm calling today's message ***Listen Up.***

We often take these passages in bite-sized chunks... but we are jumping into a stream of teaching on the same subject... on listening... on hearing God's Word, the Words of Jesus, and doing them... putting them into practice.

So to provide context, let's hear the explanation of the parable of the soils, as well as today's passage.



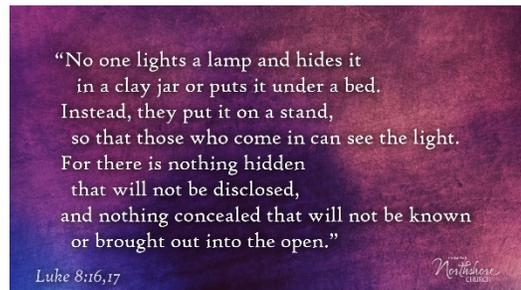
¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Pr 31:8-9). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Did you hear how the theme of listening and doing were found throughout... the beginning, the end, and throughout... the message of Jesus is to **listen up**.

Today's *bite-sized chunk* starts with illustration of a lamp on a stand; Jesus said:

¹⁶ "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light."²

That is a good illustration, right? We can understand this. There is no sense in turning on a light and then hiding it... concealing it in an opaque container or burying it, like under a bed.



No, we put the light where it will do the most good. We shine the light. We place it high and unobscured to get the most benefit.

Jesus is just using this illustration to drive the same point deeper into our minds and hearts. Just as God's Word should bear much fruit in and through our lives, God's light should shine brightly in and through our lives.

And then there is this saying that sounds something like a riddle:

¹⁷ For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.¹⁸³

Some read that *eschatologically*... meaning that this is an allusion to a final judgement when everything will be out in the open.

The truth will come out, right. The truth always comes out...

Unless it is the truth of Area 51; we can't handle that truth. I suspect that the President doesn't even know what goes on there. It seems that if he did, he would let it slip... or at least brag that he has a secret.

That must be the next thing, right. Aliens.

² [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 8:16). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

³ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 8:17-18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Seriously, with all that we've been through the past couple of months, would we really be surprised if some aliens showed up.

I think I would prefer aliens to murder hornets.

I digress.

I think this saying, about things being revealed, is best understood in its context. Jesus is talking about listening to His Word and doing it.

The point is that faith that is hidden in our hearts should be disclosed, that our faith should bear obvious fruit, that believing in Jesus should result in testimony. Receiving the light of God should result in spreading the light of God.

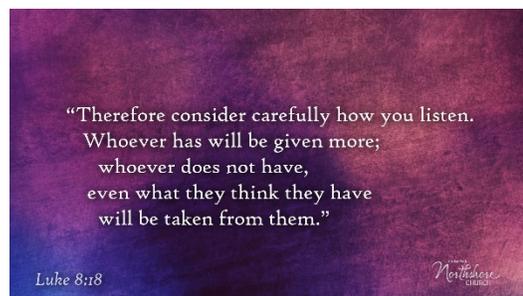
Therefore consider carefully how you listen.⁴

There it is again. Listen. Listen up.

And then there is even more language that sounds a bit like a riddle:

¹⁸ Therefore consider carefully how you listen.

Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them.”⁵



Well that doesn't seem right. That doesn't seem like justice... does it?

How could it be that those who **have** get more, and the have-nots will get whatever they have taken away? That seems like the thing that ought to be protested. That is the sort of thing that is protested.

But, again, consider the context, and the big idea. This is about listening and doing God's Word and Will.

It starts by saying, *listen carefully*... well, actually, it has a different shade of meaning. It doesn't just say listen carefully; it says "consider carefully how you listen."

How do we listen to God and His Word? We listen with faith. We listen, believing God to be true, real, caring, and active. We listen with faith. That is how we listen... and least how we should listen.

⁴ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 8:18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁵ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 8:18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

You might remember, or if you have a Bible open you can just look up to verse 10, that Jesus said that some people *get it*, and some don't. More specifically, His followers get it and others don't really see or understand.

The difference is faith. The difference is believing. The difference is a matter of trusting God and allowing His Holy Spirit to be active in our hearts, minds, and actions.

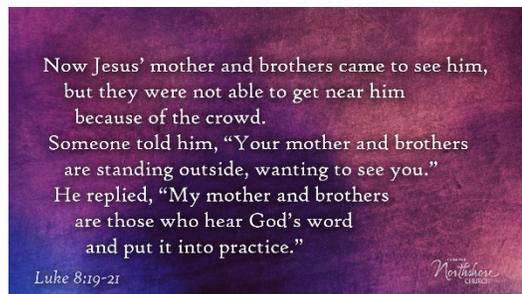
So... when we have faith, we get more faith.

But if our understanding and actions are without faith, they will not last.

Finally, there is this curious episode:

¹⁹ Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. ²⁰ Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you."

²¹ He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."⁶



Perhaps that seems disrespectful, even offensive. Please note that Jesus did not direct any disrespect at His mother and brothers; it was merely a *teaching moment*.

In fact, Jesus' mother and brothers remained a vitally important part of the early Church (noted specifically in Acts 1:14). James, the brother of Jesus, led the Church in Jerusalem, and penned the Book of James.

The point wasn't that Jesus was **excluding** His mother and brothers; the point was that Jesus was **including all** who believe, enlarging the circle.

The main message is to listen and do God's Word... and when we do... when we "hear God's word and put it into practice," then we are included in His family, co-heirs with the Son of God, like His mother and brothers.

Maybe it seems strange to think of any of us as a *mother*... but remember that, especially in this culture, the mother of Jesus was his **dependent**. It appears that Joseph was *off the scene*, presumably dead... making the eldest son (Jesus in this family) the one upon whom the rest of the family depended.

⁶ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 8:19–21). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

We are part of that family, when we believe, when we hear, and when that Word and Light of God is active in our lives.

Do notice that the call is to **listen** to and **do** God's Word. God's Word is not a mere prop or symbol.

I'm inclined to hope the President meant well with his now famous photo *opp* in front of St. John's Church. I happened to see it live, and while I appreciated the aspiration, it did seem strange.



Who holds a Bible like that?

The image has turned into a sort of *Rorschach test*. It is like those ink blots in which people see different things, and whatever they see is supposed to reveal something psychologically important.



Some see the President holding a Bible in front of that church and are *pleased*, and some are *enraged*.

Among those enraged, some are mad that he is holding a **Bible**... while others are mad that **he** is holding a Bible. These are devise times; we divide and subdivide along all sorts of lines.

I don't think we ought to *get all that worked up* about it one way or the other. I'm certain that it isn't nearly as wonderful as some think it is, and I am equally certain that it isn't nearly as awful as others think it is.

My point is... the Bible is not just a symbol to be used as a prop. God's Word is to be **listened** to. It is to be received with faith and belief. It is to be studied and understood. And it is to be put into action. That is the **truth** for all of us, for each of us, and for the President too.

And, again, when we hear and do God's word, we are placed in his family.

It doesn't seem like many address each other as brother or sister these days. When I was a new Christian at Bible College, a million years ago, people addressed one another that way.

I don't think we should, necessarily. To most ears (especially unchurched ears) it sounds weird. But the truth remains. We are bound together as family when we believe. We are bound to Jesus. And we are bound to one another. Brothers and sisters... responsible for that level of care, called to that depth of love.

Could we hear God's call and respond with that depth of love.

Jesus said:

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." ⁷

In these days of the virus and social distancing. In these days of desperate need with the shaky economy that resulted. In these tumultuous days of protesting and cries for justice... God help us to love one another in such a deeply profound way.

Can we so hear His Word and do it, can our lives so show His light, can our lives bear such fruit, that everyone will know that Jesus is alive in us and through us?

We are a *commune*... bound together with Jesus, and thus bound together with one another. That is why we call it Communion. Jesus invites us to His *family table*, to commune with Him, and to commune together as brothers and sisters.

Our team prepared a song that will lead us into Communion. We will gather together, around the Lord's Table, at the conclusion of this song. Worship with us. Prepare our hearts and minds... and even the bread and the cup, to commune and remember.

These are moments to believe.

These are moments to receive.

These are moments to dedicate ourselves to love as He loved us.

These are moments to remember.

⁷ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Jn 13:34–35). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.