

February 28th, 2021
The Second Sunday of Lent

Do You Hear It?

It's been said by a very high authority; that would be my wife, that I'm a snob. I'm a lawn snob. I like green grass and I don't like weeds in it. I'm a tool snob. I like tools that work and last. I'm snobbish about a variety of things. I'm a stereo snob and that's really how it all began. You see, back in the day, you know when we were living in caves or whatever. I noticed the distinct difference between the sound quality of an 8-track tape and a cassette tape. Of course, the cassette tape was usually made from a record and I quickly found that the sound from record you know the vinal things, sounded much better than the cassette which sounded much better than the eight track. Then the compact disc came out and well, I realized that sounded better than any of them. But I really also got in to listening to the sound quality of different amplifiers in different receivers, which led me into looking at the signal to noise ratio and the total harmonic distortion, distortion in the separation of the channels. All of these were extremely important but where did shall I say, my zeal for this stereo snobbery come from? I remember that day, it was Christmas, I believe it was 1968. My dad, who was a pastor, received a gift from the congregation. It was a new stereo, and it was fantastic. Now let me add that my dad at this time was the pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Downey, CA. This was the home to where the Apollo moon mission stuff was being built. There were a bunch of engineers in our congregation and these engineers understood a thing or two about sound, and a lot of other stuff too. So, the stereo they got my dad was pretty amazing. They had actually made a stereo record, a vinyl record that would challenge any stereo system in producing sound using the stereo effect of 2 speakers. The one I most remember was the sound of a train, a locomotive coming and going. You could hear it coming starting from the right speaker right to where it was with you; and I mean literally the ground shook and then off it went into the distance. I mean the perfect example of the Doppler effect. And from that time on I was intrigued by stereos and good sound.

And so, as I began working on today's sermon, I had to ask myself what would it be like if I heard my very first sound and I could remember it? Let me start to put things into context for you. When we look at the gospel of Mark, we go to Mark chapter five, we see that Jesus went across the sea of Galilee to the Eastern Shore which is called the Gerasene's. He met a man there who was demon possessed by; the demon said Legion for we are many. Jesus cast the demon out of this man the man was healed and after being healed of this demon possession that did terrible things to him, he wanted to be a disciple of Jesus and go with Jesus and his disciples. But Jesus told him, and I quote: "go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you." And what do we read about that man; this healed man? He went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And everyone marveled because they knew this man, and they knew how bad his demon possession was. But did you notice the change from what Jesus said and what the man said? Jesus told him to go and tell them how much the Lord had done for him; and the man went and told everyone what *Jesus* had done for him. You see this man put two and two together. He understood Jesus is the Lord. And so, he went throughout this region called the Decapolis; it's the eastern side of the sea of Galilee, extending down to the eastern side of the Jordan; extending up into what is modern day Syria. It was a fairly large area that had ten large cities. And this man went all over preaching.

Meanwhile, Jesus went back to the western shore to Galilee where he raised Jairus's daughter from the dead. From there he went up to the hill Country, to the West of the sea of Galilee, to his hometown Nazareth where He was rejected. So, He came back down went over to the East side again. Now He did this because after being rejected in Nazareth, He sent His twelve disciples out to go and spread the gospel throughout Israel. When they came back, they were bushed. They were beat and said let's go for a vacation. Let's go over to the other side to get away. But when they got over to the other side, the word about Jesus coming had already spread over there; and people ran over and came running to because this man had been sharing the good news in the Decapolis and Jesus found this huge crowd waiting for Him.

That's where He fed the 5000. And after the feeding the 5000 He realized that this was not a good place to take a vacation because there was a huge crowd there. So, He sent his disciples back across to the town of Gennesaret and that's when Jesus then later followed them up by walking on water. But when they arrived in Gennesaret what happened? When they got out of the boat the people immediately recognized Him and they ran about the whole region and they brought the sick to wherever He was, to the villages, to the cities, to the countryside, even to the marketplace. When Jesus went to buy groceries, the people came being laid the sick people out and they begged Him, please just let them touch the fringe of your garment. It was getting crazy. It was a zoo. He was a miracle worker! It was too crazy, so He left. He went West to the coast and went up to Tyre and Sidon two Gentile cities and what is now modern-day Lebanon. After being there awhile, He came back and he went back over to the East side to the Decapolis where the demoniac had been preaching, where He had fed the 5000. So, it's again, no surprise that as soon as He lands, they brought to Him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment and they begged Him to lay His hand on him?

And here is where we see now a major shift in Jesus's ministry. It had become almost a circus, a zoo, with people just coming, coming, coming, because of the miracles. So, Jesus took the man away privately. It was there that He touched his ears. Much like He did last week with the blind man. He evidently spit on the ground made a little mud and got it on His finger and touched it to his ear. Then we see the next major change. The man wasn't healed immediately. Jesus didn't send him home, but Jesus looked up towards heaven and he sighed. Why would he sigh? All these people bringing people individuals, humans, His creation who were suffering under the curse of sin. It grieved Jesus and so He looks up at the sky. At the same time, I think that we see later on in the chapter; verse 12 of chapter 8 He casts the sigh because of the superficiality of the people. The people wanted signs, they wanted miracles, they wanted a show. But did they want to repent? This ministry crazy, here, here, here, here, crowds everywhere, paparazzi, it was tiring Jesus out because He was true man. So, He looks to heaven, sighs, looks at the man and says, 'be open.' And the man heard and spoke clearly. Which again is a fantastic miracle because Jesus somehow reworked the workings of his ear, of the auditory nerve of the connection

to the brain, but then He also put in the man's mind, in his brain, a memory of how to speak clearly; and the man spoke clearly.

But then we see the third major change Jesus charged them to tell no one. "Don't tell anyone that I just did this!" Why? Because He wasn't there just to be a show. He wasn't just a miracle worker, He's the savior and He has a message: Repent, the Kingdom of heaven is here. But the people were losing the message and focusing on the action, the miracle. But the more that He charged them to tell no one, the more zealously they proclaimed it. Why? Well, Mark tells us why. They were astonished beyond measure. They said, 'He has done all things well.' Now why would this be astonishing? Because they didn't see Him as Lord and Savior. And when compared to the rest of mankind, Jesus was most unique. Number one yes, He healed, He fed, He did the miraculous things; but He also did it in a very personal nature. He touched the man who was deaf. He touched the man who was blind; and under Jewish law or tradition they were unclean, but He was personal. And then again on both sides of the sea. He was doing these things for the Jews and for the Gentiles. He truly was equitable, shall we say. And yet He was humble; don't tell people about this. Don't make this about me, but about the message.

I want you just think today, does anybody you know live up to the doing all things well like Jesus did? No, I mean we'd love politicians that were humble, didn't want to take the credit, who didn't have the word I in their vocabulary. And that's always been the case. So Jesus was much different and like my first stereo experience; this sounded really good because it was really different from what the people had experienced. It was so equitable so humble and yet it was prophesied by Isaiah that He would make the deaf to hear, the mute to speak. And as it said in our Old Testament reading this morning Genesis 12; that the Messiah would be a blessing to all people.

Which takes me now back to Isaiah 6. After the Lord had given Isaiah a vision of Himself, of heaven, He said, 'Whom shall I send?' And Isaiah said, 'here am I, send me. And what did God then tell him? Go to these people and tell them, 'keep on hearing and not understanding, keep on seeing and not perceiving.' Isaiah 'go and preach my word to them and

make the hearts of the people dull, their ears heavy, their eyes blind.' Now when you hear that, you might say, 'wait a second, is God telling Isaiah go out and make these people so they can't hear or so they can't see? No, what He's telling Isaiah is 'go and preach my word, and as you preach my word, some people will hopefully listen and come to faith and follow.' But many of them are going to hear it, and not understand. They're going to see it, and not perceive it. And as you keep preaching it, it's going to end up becoming dull to them. Oh, that's Isaiah, you know he's a religious fanatic. He's that guy out there that he's lost touch with reality, he doesn't understand society, and what he really needs to do. He doesn't know what the people need to hear today, or what they want to hear. Doesn't that sound rather familiar with our polls and everything else that we have in our country today? What do people need to hear today? Well, I can tell you what they don't need to hear, and they don't need to see. They don't need to see a show. They don't need to be a part of some circus. They don't need to hear a message that is you oriented. What they need is to hear the truth: the Law, the Gospel, the Covenant, the prophecies fulfilled and what it all means. Because if they hear it all, they might just understand.

This again takes me back to Isaiah. Poor Isaiah, being called to be a prophet to kings, that had become pagans. But he was dealing with King Ahaz, a guy who would fit very well when the 20th and 21st Century, who's listening to the polls. The people wanted to worship pagan gods; OK, we'll build them temples for the pagan gods. If they want to do these sinful things, OK, we'll say it's alright. We'll rewrite the laws and say it's OK. He was giving the people what they wanted to hear and what they wanted to do. And Isaiah comes to him and says 'Hey, knock it off! It's wrong. And he says, and listen to this, "If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all." In other words, Ahaz, if you don't put your total trust in the message of the Bible, of what God says; if you don't have faith in that, then you will not be firm in faith. And since you're not firm in faith, you won't be firm at all. You won't be able to tell people no, no, no, those pagan temples and stuff, you're worshipping pieces of stone. They are not God. And those practices that you want to do that we've changed laws of, they are wrong. You see without a firm faith, you can't stand firm at all.

And I'm sure some of you are thinking right now, boy we can see that in our country! We can see that in our state. But I want you to think about in the Church. I read quite a long article this week about how the vast majority of evangelicals do not believe the Genesis account. And that since they don't believe that God created the world in a week like He says but that He really, you know maybe used evolution; or possibly if you can believe this; alien lifeforms brought life here. But since they can't believe what the Bible says, then it draws into question what they believe about the flood; and if the flood really happened. Well now, that couldn't be really a worldwide flood. And it just goes on and on to the point of even questioning, did Jesus really live? Did He really die? Did He really rise? Or is it all just an allegory? And we wonder why we see some churches embracing what society demands that we embrace.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to see, and hear, and understand, and perceive all that is going on around us. Just as much as we need to see, and hear, God's Word and understand and perceive it. This is why we again are called to be disciples; because people need to see and hear us so that they might understand and might perceive that Jesus is their Savior. At the same time we have to understand like with Isaiah; it may also dull their eyes and their ears. And they may not want to perceive understand. Like the man who walked down the seashore and saw all these clams up on the shore, and you know, the tide was going out is clams are going to die, and he's throwing them into the water. An individual looked at him and said there are millions of clams on the sand and you are never going to make a difference. As he threw the next clam out, he said, 'It did for that one.'

Do you hear it? May we be seen, may we be heard, and may people see and hear the wonderful news of Salvation. Because we might just make a difference for that one. In our Saviors' Name, Amen.