

Order of worship for 4/15/12, (John 7:25-36), Title: “He who has ears to hear...”

Ministry Moment: missions (perhaps something for Walk for Life also?)

Call to worship: Hosea 4:1-10 and 6:1-3

Worship theme: God is a God of truth: He is faithful to all His promises

Kari - Order of Worship for April 15th, John 7:10-24, “A Proper View”

Pre-service Song: **Forever – Chris Tomlin - CCLI Song Number: 3148428**

Welcome -and Announcements

Ministry Moment: (perhaps something for Walk for Life also?)

Call to Worship: Hosea 4:1-10 and 6:1-3

(the worship theme is God is a God of truth: He is faithful to all His promises

Preparing the heart in Song:

- **Rejoice the Lord is King – Hymnal #370**
- **Thy Word - Hymnal #184**
- **Great is Thy Faithfulness - Hymnal #139**

Offering and Offertory

Special Music: **Catherine Sweetman**

Message: “He who has ears to hear...” (John 7:25-36)

By Pastor Bronson

Songs of Worship in Response to the Word:

- **Change My Heart O God - Hymnal #654**

Parting Word of Grace

“The Prayer Closet”

April 15, 2012

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying that:

1. **Lois McMartin and EFCA ReachGlobal Ministries:** the Spirit will gift Lois with strength for travel and wisdom for counsel as she travels overseas to missionary families; the Lord will raise up both short term and career missionaries for worldwide missions, the financial downturn and economic recession will not compromise the worldwide effectiveness of the Free Church missions
2. **President Obama:** he and his family will be protected from all evil; the Spirit will enable him to concentrate on the presidency and not on campaigning, he will gratefully receive the Lord’s guidance for wisdom
3. **Women’s Ministries:** the Lord will lead the women in a spiritually reviving retreat next weekend; the Zebra ministry will result in strong spiritual bonds and spiritual growth; the Lord will lead the women into new ministries to neighbors and our community
4. **Military or Public Service Personnel of the Week: Cole Wagenaar, SPC Army**
(brother in law of Pam Cervantes)
5. **Young Adult of the Week: Maggie Conley at Butte College** (daughter of Dave and Barbara Conley)

The title of today’s message is “He Who has Ears to Hear”. You probably recognize that as a phrase that often came from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ. The text for today is John 7:25-36. I am going to begin by reading that section of the Word. We are dropping down in the midst of an on-going discourse and I will make some comments about that after I have had a chance to complete reading this section.

“Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, ‘Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.’ So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, ‘You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.’ So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, ‘When Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?’

“The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. Jesus then said, ‘I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.’ The Jews said to one another, ‘Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What does he mean by saying, ‘You will seek me and you will not find me,’ and ‘Where I am you cannot come?’”

To recapture some of the context, notice that the section begins [with] “therefore”; “*Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said...*” It has been nearly two weeks since we looked at this passage. We have gone through the Easter season and so we shifted our focus from the immediate unfolding of John’s narrative of Jesus’ life. We want to remind ourselves of what has occurred just before this so that we can know what prompts the conversation that we are now going to be looking at. At first it is not obvious if you read the whole flow [of John’s narrative], it is not obvious what the argument is between the Jews and Jesus, and yet the argument is hot. It doesn’t appear that Jesus has done anything in particular. He just stands up in the temple and He is talking. Talk is cheap, right?

What does Jesus have to say, however? Jesus is standing amidst a huge crowd. This is one of the great feasts. Jews have come from all over the Roman Empire and outside of the Roman Empire in order to celebrate this particular feast. Jesus is standing in one of the [temple] courts. By now, you need to know, the temple in Jerusalem has become a large and complex place. Herod the Great had spent huge amounts of money in order to make it one of the architectural wonders of the ancient world. These are the faithful ones who come and they come pouring in. They are there to celebrate the heritage of their nation. Along with the pilgrims you can be quite certain that there are the temple guards, there are the authorities – the Pharisees and the Sadducees – and right outside the temple are the Roman imperial forces, because this is an occupied nation. The Jews hate being occupied. So what do you think the underlying tenor of things might be?

If you look back to verses 21-24 we see that what Jesus does is He directly challenges one of the dominant groups regarding the Sabbath. The Sabbath is one of those aspects of Jewish life that was first put into place by a man named Moses. Moses is the hero of Israel. He is Abraham Lincoln and George Washington wrapped up in one. He

was the giver of the law, he was the prophet of the Lord, he was the liberator of Israel from Egypt, and he was the one who in consultation with God, if you will, establishes the covenant that defines the nation.

The Sabbath: since the Babylonian Exile, which had occurred about [550] years before the events we are looking at now, the Sabbath had become the identifying mark of the Jews. Sabbath observance told anyone who was interested, “I am a Jew; I am a member of the covenant people of God; I am enjoying a unique relationship between the Lord God Almighty and the only people on earth whom He has chosen.” It had not always been that way. Indeed if you go back into the Old Testament you realize that Sabbath observance was rare, not common, in the history of Israel. Two of the greatest of the prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, both are prompted by God to talk to the Jews about Sabbath observance. I am going to read a portion of both of those prophets. The first is Isaiah chapter 58:13-14. I suggest that later you go and read the entire chapter, because the whole chapter deals with Sabbath observance, but verses 13-14 is the core. He says, *“If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”* Drop that into an oppressed people’s heart and mind and ask yourselves, would they grab it? Now listen to Jeremiah; this is a little longer: 17:19-25 and 27.

“Thus said the Lord to me: ‘Go and stand in the People’s Gate, by which the kings of Judah enter and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem, and say: ‘Hear the word of the Lord, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates. Thus says the Lord: take care for the sake of your lives, and do not bear a burden on the Sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath or do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your fathers. Yet they did not listen or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck, that they might not hear and receive instruction. But if you listen to me, declares the Lord, and bring in no burden by the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but keep the Sabbath day holy and do no work on it, then there shall enter by the gates of this city kings and princes who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their officials, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And this city shall be inhabited forever. . . But if you do not listen to me, to keep the Sabbath day holy, and not to bear a burden and enter by the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched.’”

All of those [dreaded] things have happened. That crowd standing there listening to Jesus knows that every curse has happened, and that the hand of the Lord has crushed the city and destroyed the temple and scattered the people. They know that. So they observe the Sabbath.

If Sabbath observance was the outward distinctive of the Jews as the covenant people of God, circumcision was considered to be the sign, and as they saw it, the seal of their membership in the covenant. The covenant was the binding and even legal relationship between God and Israel. I am just about to reread a wonderful book that I got when I was back at the Ligonier’s Conference. It is called “Introducing Covenant Theology”. It is by a man named Michael Horton. I strongly recommend if you have any inclination at all that you might want to order that book and read it. It is the clearest exposition of the covenants I have ever read, and it has been extremely encouraging to me. The covenant arrangement establishing the nation of Israel as the people of God is actually what you read in the book of Deuteronomy. Graciously given, in other words freely given by God, it was to be dutifully observed. When you read Deuteronomy you realize God says I will bless you *if*. . . I will bless you *if*. . . Later on He says, by the way, if you don’t do such and such, what will happen? Bam! If you think I am making that up, just go and read Deuteronomy 28, and you will know why you should never let a child read the Bible, because it talks about parents eating their own children, and that happened.

To avoid a repeat of that disaster, the Pharisees in particular were insistent that the laws of the Sabbath would be observed. Observing the Sabbath affirmed and confirmed the covenant with God. It is the same thing we do when we partake of the Lord's Supper. That, by the way, is why some churches actually have communion every week.

So Jesus – I hope I have got you ginned up enough emotionally so you realize – Jesus stands up and [seems] to say [so casually], “O Sabbath...” [And the Jews respond with] “What?” So Jesus by word and deed appears to directly reject Sabbath observance, because He does this stuff on the Sabbath that He is not supposed to do. Yet the crowd says the authorities don't do anything [to Jesus]. Look at verses 25-26 again now. This is why I have done all this. It is to get you into the flow. So in verses 25-26, “*Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said...*” isn't this guy who is standing up in public and talking, isn't he the one who breaks the Sabbath, and we already know that the authorities have decided to get rid of him, and there he stands, and they don't do anything! What's going on; what is happening here. It doesn't make any sense.” That is what John wants us to gather. So they ask the question at the end: “*Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ?*”

I want to stop for a moment and think about that. Let that question assume its full force. What do you think? Did those authorities know that Jesus actually was the Christ? It is counter-intuitive: instinctively we say, “It is the Christ!” But how could they not know? Jesus has raised the dead; he has fed the multitude, and if you go through John, if you have followed in our studies, you know that Jesus has said over and over again [implicitly] “I am the Christ.” This is the real issue. The question is not, “Who is Jesus?” The question is, rather, how did these men manage to avoid admitting what is so obviously the case? Here is the real question: How do people handle the evidence that tells them what they do not want to know so that they manage to remain ignorant? Now you may think that that is an impossible thing, that what I am talking about simply doesn't ever happen. Let me give you a few examples. Did you ever know somebody who knew the deadline but forgot when it occurred, you know, like when the homework was due? O yeah! Or did you ever realize, “O my goodness, it's the fifteenth of April, and I haven't started [my taxes]!” Just like you had no idea that the fourteenth was the day before. I have a variety of other things like, “You mean I was supposed to clean my room?” “You're always supposed to clean your room!” “You mean this time too?” How do we manage to do this? To bury and obscure and deny what we know? [stray comments were edited out here]

The thing that is significant is to realize that these people succeeded. This is what is most interesting. Suppressing the knowledge works. In Acts 3:12-17 this is what we read. This is Peter. Peter is addressing a group of people (Jews) after he and [the apostle] John have performed a miracle and [the people] are all excited. He is talking to them about their excitement. He says, “

“Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, - we're talking about an event that probably didn't occur at [more than] maybe two months after the crucifixion; this is not a distant memory – when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.”

Really? What kind of ignorance is this? This is moral ignorance; it is culpable ignorance. It is the ignorance that says, “I refuse to know.”

Returning to John's gospel at 7:27 we hear the people say, “*But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.*” We are back to the question here of the origin of Jesus. Here is what we need to ask: was it really true that no one was supposed to know where the messiah came

from? You all know the answer: think about that. Good heavens, no! What a stupid comment. Why do I know it is a stupid comment? Partly because I read the Bible. You see, it was clearly stated in the prophets where the messiah would be born. And it was one of the criteria to determine whether or not this individual was in fact the messiah, that he came from the right place. You all know this. How many of you celebrate Christmas? How many of you remember the magi, those three to forty five men who came wandering – nobody knows how many there were, so maybe there were 45! – they came from the east and they ask a question: “We’re looking for the messiah which prophecy says is going to be born. Where might we find him?” What does Herod do? Zips off to the authorities. “Any idea of where he is going to be born?” “Yeah, he is going to be born in Bethlehem.” That was not a question. Matthew 2:5-6, *“They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.””* They knew that was to be the messiah. So why did the people of Jerusalem think that no one was supposed to know where the messiah was to come from, especially as having that proper origin was one of the qualifications? Well, we don’t know why, but I would make this observation: people prefer to air their opinions to actually doing the necessary research. Do you think I am making that up? You should come and listen to one of the Bronson family discussions. Maybe you can identify with this. Being fairly intelligent and well educated people, we have calendars, maps, dictionaries, encyclopedias and the internet. Do we use any of those when we talk about stuff? Heavens no: we just talk. We compete in telling each other what we think until finally somebody kills the entire conversation by saying, “Well, let’s look it up!” My point is this, this is common human behavior. We should never think that such common patterns are not applied to the profoundest issues with which we wrestle. You will find further evidence of this pattern of denial in verses 40-43. I’m not going to turn there; you can look it up a little bit later. *“...some said, ‘Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem...?’”*

Well let’s go back again to John 7:25-31. This is a strange conversation. By now you should realize this is not a normal conversation between Jesus and the crowd or the authorities. Recall that earlier, in chapter 6:41 if you want to go back and look at that, the people claimed to know who Jesus’ father was. They knew where Jesus came from and they knew who His father was. Yet in the other gospels the people “knew” that Joseph did not father Jesus and therefore nobody knew who the father was. So we have another piece of interesting information about the way people work. Remember we are figuring out how people manage to not know what the evidence tells them they should know. For some people knowing or not knowing is a matter of convenience. It depends upon the situation. “Young man, do you know what time it was when you came home last night?” the father asks. “Oh, a little later than I was supposed to come in?” the son replies. “What about 1:00 o’clock?” says the dad. “One o’clock? Impossible!” declares the boy. “Yes: was there a clock in the car? On the hand? Or anyplace digital?” the father asks. “Do they have those?” the son wonders aloud. Common patterns by which we play mental games to avoid dealing with reality apply in our spiritual lives.

Knowing that this is not a normal conversation at 7:25 should help us to understand what Jesus is saying. This, by the way is the origin of the title: “How do we have ears to hear?” Notice that at this point Jesus changes the terms of the conversation. This is a very important thing to notice. Drop down to verse 28, *“So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, - now listen very carefully to this in terms of his origin, where he is from, he says, ‘You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him, for I came from him, and he sent me.’”* What has Jesus done with the question of origins? He has changed the question. Whether He comes from Nazareth, which some would know and claim, or whether He comes from Bethlehem, which some would likely know and claim, is not the issue. It is not where He came from but instead who sent Him; that now becomes the question. What Jesus says is, you don’t know who sent me. He has refocused the question from himself as a man in their midst to the relationship between Himself as an emissary and the One who has sent Him. The emphasis now falls not on do they know where Jesus comes from, but do they know the One who sent Him. That is now the question.

They have fooled around with traditions and speculations and maybe prophecies and they have played with this and that, but the issue is whether or not they know God. The issue is, “Can they tell whether or not this person’s character and purpose agree with God’s character and purpose?” If you are familiar with some brands of prophecy teaching and preaching, this should ring a bell. An avid setting of dates and events and all manner of interesting things regarding the future and suddenly you realize, whatever happened to Jesus? Whatever happened to the Savior? Whatever happened to the One who sets before us the pattern for living now?

Do we know God? Would we even recognize a man of God if he arrived? [We would] not if we are playing games of denial.

It is interesting, however, that the people seem to know who Jesus is. What they say in v. 31 is, can anybody but the Christ do all this?

In verses 32-36 we shift the focus of our narrative. Notice that at this point we have a focus on the authorities: they are the ones who are asking. Begin with me at verse 32. *“The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. Jesus then said ‘I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.’ The Jews – and what [John] means by the Jews is the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the chief priests, they are the authorities – “...the Jews said to one another, ‘Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What does he mean by saying, ‘You will seek me and you will not find me,’ and, ‘Where I am you cannot come?’”*

Here is the last thing I am going to say today. Jesus is now talking to the men who were responsible for teaching the nation the truth about God, and those men are in denial. Do you remember what we had as a call to worship today? Let us go back to Hosea 4. I encourage you to turn there. What is important for us to understand is that that chapter is written primarily to the priests, because the priests had stopped teaching and preaching the truth. *“Hear...O children of Israel, for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens, and even the fish of the sea are taken away. Yet let no one contend, and let none accuse, for with you is my contention, O priest.”* The single most important decision you will ever make in life is whether or not you will place your personal faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. But very close behind that is the person you are willing to come under the authority of their teaching, because it is absolutely critical that the people of God know the truth of God in order to avoid the curses of God on their land. Beloved our nation is in a heap of trouble. Beloved, let’s pray.

Gracious Father in heaven, it is hard to come to a conclusion that is so filled with peril, but we would not play games with You, we would not be in denial. We know, our Father, that there are many pulpits that have abandoned the Bible, and what they preach is not just of no consequence; it is very consequential indeed, for we have become a nation increasingly sunk into spiritual ignorance and there is trouble in the land. Have mercy upon us. May we be faithful. Raise up men who will preach and teach the truth without regard to cost. We ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Questions for Understanding and Application:

1. What would you say is the core of a Christian’s identity as a participant in the new covenant people of God?

2. What do you understand as the meaning and benefit of the Lord’s Supper?

3. Have you had experience in dealing with people who seem to remain completely ignorant in spite of all kinds of evidence? In your opinion, how can people manage to do this?

4. In your experience what are the sort of things which people prefer not to know even if the necessary information is readily available? Why do people prefer not to know these things?

5. What is the difference between evaluating someone according to where they are from as opposed to who they are like?