

Title: HEARING GOD SPEAK, JOHN 12:20 – 33
(Chatham, NJ; 03/18/18, AM) [Pd – Topical]

Theme: Hearing God speak may come from an intuitive sense of His presence, but most often it comes from heeding his commands as expressed in the Word of God and given by Jesus Christ.

Purpose: To clarify more precisely what we mean when we talk about hearing God speak to us.

Introduction:

1. Note the recent controversy about Mike Pence's comment that Jesus speaks to him.
2. I have heard people say, "God spoke to my heart," and "The Holy Spirit revealed to me."
3. Though I think God may nudge us sometimes in intuitive ways, the content of the message these individuals received was at best suspect.
4. When someone says they received something directly from the Holy Spirit, it is pretty difficult to get them to believe the message may have been wrong.
5. The direct operation of the Holy Spirit on someone is mysterious (think the wind in the trees), but His message can only be confirmed by its relationship to the Word of God, the most certain revelation given by the Holy Spirit.
6. Let's talk about hearing God speak.

What Christians Mean (Or Should Mean)

- A. Article by J. Warner Wallace (a former atheist turned Christian apologist)
 1. Through Scripture – we all agree on this though various groups may question what it says
 2. A sage advisor (older Christian, minister, elder, etc.) – Some people who claim some direct revelation by the Holy Spirit consider this suspect when the advisor questions them.
 3. A particular situation – I've said before that the Bible is self-authenticating; sometimes we are confirmed in what it says by experiencing it; see Acts 10:34-35.
 4. Supernatural interaction – hearing God audibly as in John 12; this is so rare that it only happened three times that we know of in Christ's life.
 5. And I'm not even sure how God revealed his Word to the prophets, "Thus says the Lord."
- B. Exhaust the known possibilities
 1. The first three can be pretty reliable
 2. We should exhaust especially the first two before we proceed, Proverbs 3, "Don't rely on your own insights."
 3. Pentecostals in particular are prone to "hear" things and credit them with the authority of the Holy Spirit.
 4. Even in the first century, difficulties abounded: in John 21:23 many people misunderstood what Jesus said about John's death
 5. Peter even mentions that his fellow apostle, Paul, was sometimes hard to understand, 2 Peter 3:16

How Do We Hear?

- A. "He who has ears, let him hear," Mark 4:9
 1. Truth in one's inner being, Psalm 51:6
 2. Jeremiah 17:9 – the prophet saw the depth of deception in the human heart
 3. Meditate on God's law, Psalm 1:2; 119:15
 4. Scripture can make us wise for salvation, 2 Timothy 3:15
 5. Desire to be taught, have a teachable spirit, Ps. 119:12 – He who has ears
- B. Barriers to hearing
 1. Lack of humility, Mt. 5:3 – Poor in spirit
 2. Lack of shame, Jeremiah 6:15, Israel didn't even blush because of their shameful deeds

3. Sin cause callousness of heart, Ephesians 4:18-19
4. Desiring impurity (see Yarbrough, 1 John, 222)
5. Qumran literature speaks of two spirits, one is call the destructive spirit and is characterized by: greed, slackness in the search for righteousness, lies, pride, deceit, cruelty, ill temper, etc.

What Does God Say?

- A. Do not believe every spirit, 1 John 4:1-6
 1. Enthusiasm and zeal are no guarantees of truth
 2. Listening to your inner self is also no guarantee of truth
 3. Identifying the voice within us: there can be competing voices
 4. I'm not saying he doesn't come to us in such a way, only that we must test the message
 5. Truthful spirits must be true to Christ, verse 2-3
 6. This includes the teaching that he has come in the flesh but also his overall teachings, including the inspired apostles who were his witnesses
 7. Listening to the witness of the Apostles (6) will help differentiate error from truth

- B. Satan is the spirit of chaos
 1. God is not a God of confusion, 1 Corinthians 14:33
 2. That is Satan's job
 3. The one thing we can know for sure about foreign governments interfering in our democracy is that they will do even the most subtle things to so discord
 4. When Reagan was running for president, allegedly KKK members showed up at one of his rallies to support him; it was proven later on that some groups who wanted to defeat him had hired people to do this.
 5. Satan loves to sow chaos, sometimes in some very subtle ways

Conclusion:

1. Meditate long and hard about messages you think come directly from God.
2. What does the Word of God say?
3. What do mature Christians say?
4. Even tradition could help: nowhere in 2,000 years of Christian understanding has anybody ever legitimized homosexual behavior; if it is so obvious to modern thinkers, surely some theologian would have come up with it before now.
5. Meditate on God's Word; be honest with your own sins and misunderstandings; participate in discussions with others in church; tests the spirits.
6. Does God speak to us? Yes.
7. Just be careful what you hear and how you hear Him.