

### **Week 3: Matthew 13:10-17**

<sup>10</sup> Then the disciples came and asked him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"

<sup>11</sup> He answered, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

<sup>12</sup> For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.

<sup>13</sup> The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.'

<sup>14</sup> With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says: 'You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive.

<sup>15</sup> For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn-- and I would heal them.'

<sup>16</sup> But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.

<sup>17</sup> Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.

### **Listen to Me Now and Hear Me Later**

Sisters and Brothers in Christ, Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever seen Hans and Franz? They were two big burly weight lifters on Saturday Night Live that were played by Dana Carvey and Kevin Nealon and spoke with Austrian accents. They were modeled after Arnold Schwarzenegger and constantly made fun of the little girly man. "Ya, he's just a little girly man, you need to lift weights because we are Hans and Franz and we are here to pump, you up!" They had another phrase that they would say too, "Listen to me now and hear me later." It's funny because there is a difference between listening and hearing.

I can remember my mom often asking me, "Can you hear me?" Usually this was when she was telling me to do something while I was watching television and she was walking out the door. Usually, it was along lines of wash the dishes, mow the lawn, haul in some firewood or something like that, I'm not sure because I wasn't really paying attention. She simply asked if I could hear her, she didn't ask if I was listening. We often hear things, but how often do we listen to them?

Our theme for these Wednesday nights is opening. We are asking God to open us up to his Word. The first week was our eyes. Last week was hands and this week, we are asking God to open our ears. There is a saying, "You have two ears and one mouth, that means that you should listen twice as much as you talk." Right? But how often do we actually listen?

On Sunday mornings, we have been hearing Jesus teach the people about the kingdom of God by telling parables. Sometimes, though, those parables are hard to listen to and even harder to understand. And it's okay to admit that we don't always understand what Jesus is telling us because the disciples often asked Jesus about it too? They will ask Jesus to explain the parables to them. In our reading for tonight, they flat out asked him, "why do you speak to them in

parables?” “Them” are the crowds of people that gather around Jesus. Jesus tells the disciples “The reason I speak to them in parables is that ‘seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.’ For one thing, Jesus is fulfilling a prophecy in Isaiah. “You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with eyes, listen with their ears and understand with their heart and turn... and I would heal them.” The people are not paying attention, they are focusing only on what they want to see or hear. It’s sad and funny that the old saying rings true, the more things change, the more they stay the same. We see and hear what we want to see and hear. As long as it fits into what we think is right, we can accept it as fact. And we completely shut our eyes and ears to anything else. We stand in an echo chamber and listen to what we want to hear.

And yet, Jesus is calling us out of that. Even amongst Christians, it is amazing how we can pick and chose what we want to in the bible. And as we read thru the Gospel of Matthew right now, I’m astonished at how much the Jesus that I had pictured differs from how Matthew portrays him. To me, Jesus seems so much harsher and more judgmental. I want the happy, friendly, warm, and fuzzy Jesus. But it is good to hear this other side, it is good to hear how other people see and hear Jesus. It helps us to gain an understanding of what others are experiencing.

In college, I took an intro to counseling class. What I thought was going to be a study in theory, like Freud, Jung and some other big names, was actually a study in practice. And do you know what we practiced? Listening. At the time, I hated it and it was hard because listening takes a lot of practice. It was more than just hearing another person’s voice. We had to listen to what the other person was saying and then try to understand what they were saying and give a summary of what they were saying and what they were not saying. We were learning empathy and throughout the semester, we had to meet with our partner and practice listening to one another. For one thing, it was great to be more than heard, but to have someone listen and pay attention to what was going on. The other thing, it was amazing to be able to give that gift back to someone else.

Last night, I finally got around to burning my brush pile. It didn’t burn as well as I had hoped it would because of all the snow on the sides of it, so I had to help it along by shoveling coals into the areas that hadn’t caught fire yet. And it was so peaceful, to watch the flames dance and hear the fire popping and cracking. And as I stood outside, I heard a couple of geese fly overhead as they looked for open water. And it was an amazing experience, to simple stand outside and listen to God’s creation. I am slightly jealous of the disciples, they got to sit around a fire and hear Jesus tell his parables and stories first hand, but I am grateful that they eventually wrote them down, for us to hear them and that we get to listen to God’s Word now.

### **Week 3**

Open our ears, Lord, to heed your will for our lives. Help us not only to hear, but to listen and understand with our hearts. In Jesus’ name we pray. **Amen.**