

One of the health issues that seems to find its way into our lives as we get older, is the ability to hear clearly what someone is saying. How many times have you been in one room and your spouse or friend is in the other room, and they holler something out at you, and you say “What did you say?” They end up repeating it again to you. My wife sometimes says I have selective hearing. In other words, if I am watching the Detroit Lions or Michigan State Spartans, I don’t hear a word that she is saying to me.

Or what about the TV volume levels. I have spoken to members at Open Bible who have said that whenever they visit their parents, or certain friends, the TV is so loud that it hurts their ears. Or what about when I go on vacation and you have a guest speaker. One of the critical comments always seems to be that the speaker had a nice message, but we couldn’t hear him. So what do we do when we have hearing problems? Well some of you spend thousands of dollars on hearing aids. You try to find the almost invisible kind so that no one knows you are wearing them. Some people feel embarrassed when others can see that they are wearing hearing aids. At Open Bible we recently invested over \$5000.00 to get this church looped, so that if you go to church wearing the latest hearing aid you can adjust a button, and it will pick up our church sound system. I still remember how joyful Russ Niermeyer was when we got the looped system at Open Bible. Russ would say, “I can clearly hear everything that you say now Pastor. It’s so great to hear everything.”

This morning its time for all of us to get a hearing test. The hearing test will not be at the Villages hospital or a local Miracle Ear center. The test will be right here at Open Bible. Your physician and hearing specialist will be Jesus Christ. You may have a bit of trouble hearing from time to time what people are saying. But today, you won’t miss a word, as Jesus helps us “Find the Ultimate Hearing Aid!”

We are told that some people brought to Jesus a man who was deaf and could hardly talk. They begged Jesus to place his hands on him and heal him. Here was a man who could not hear. Here was a man who had strange sounds coming out of his mouth when he tried to talk. One thing this man had going for him. He had people who cared about him and brought him to Jesus for healing. It sure is good to have Christian friends who care about you when you go through difficult times in life. It sure is a blessing to be part of a congregation where people regularly support and pray for people who have are going through difficult times.

Hearing loss was not just a problem with people at Jesus’ time. It is still a problem with people today. It is estimated that there are 300 million people in the world today with some form of hearing loss. Some are born with a hearing loss. Others have their hearing damaged by sickness and disease or too much loud music blasted directly into the ears. Years ago, I attended a Styxx concert in Saginaw, Michigan. I was up front by the speakers. I firmly believe that after that concert I lost some of my hearing abilities. Look around today at Open Bible members. Some us find ourselves wearing hearing aids. But in our lesson, the man did not have a hearing aid. His world was one of total silence.

Notice now how Jesus takes this man aside to help him. It says that Jesus took him aside away from the crowd. Jesus had compassion on him. He felt compassion and love for this man who never heard the birds sing, never heard a dog bark, never heard his mother speak the words, “I love you.”

Compassion seems to be a rare commodity these days. It happens so often. You’re

frazzled because of some problem. You make a phone call to the people you think can help you and you hear: “Press 1 if you want information about our office hours. Press 2 if you would like information about your account. Press 3 if you would like to pay your bill. Press 4 if you would like to speak to a service agent.” Then you listen to music for fifteen minutes during which you are reminded how important your phone call is until at last someone starts to speak to you. Living in an uncaring and impersonal world, it is easy to think that our Savior is that way. But nothing could be further from the truth.

The Bible says about our Savior that “his compassions fail not, his mercies are new every morning.” There is not a day that goes by, a morning that we get up or a night that we go to bed when Jesus isn’t filled with compassion for us. He knows and cares about our hurts and our heartaches, our sufferings and our sorrows. The Bible says that Jesus sympathizes with our weakness, our helplessness. Whether we’re talking about our physical aches and pains or our spiritual struggles and strains, he looks at us and he understands what we’re going through and is filled with compassion. Other people may not know or may not care what we are going through, but not Jesus. Other people may live their lives oblivious to the hurts we are experiencing, but not Jesus. Other people may pass us by, but not Jesus.

A little boy was asked to give the definition of a friend. He thought for a while trying to find just the right words and finally said, “A friend is someone who likes us even though he knows us.” That definition may not be found in a dictionary, but isn’t it a beautiful way to describe a friend? And isn’t it a beautiful way to describe Jesus? He knows us! He knows our sins! He knows our ups and our downs. He knows our strengths and our weaknesses. He knows the messes we get ourselves into. He knows the problems we’re facing. He knows every one of them, yet he still likes us. He looks at us and his heart goes out to us in love and pity and compassion. If every day we started out remembering that fact, we would never forget what a wonderful Savior Jesus is.

How many people living in your community or even in your family have ears that are closed to hearing God’s Word? Jesus said of the people who rejected his teaching, “For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.” See the disobedient child put his hands over his ears so he does not have to listen to his mother speak to him. See the person still in unbelief holding their hands over their ears so they do not have to listen to what God says to them here in his Word. I was born into this world with ears that did not want to hear God’s Word. Only by God’s grace can my ears long to hear God’s Word proclaimed and taught to me.

Now we take a closer look at Jesus as he opens this man’s ears to hear and touches his tongue so that he can speak. It says that Jesus took his fingers and put them into the man’s ears. The man can feel the fingers of Jesus being placed into his ears. He can see Jesus spit. He can feel the finger of Jesus touching his tongue. Here are the loving compassionate hands of Jesus demonstrating to this man who cannot hear and speak that a mighty miracle is about to happen.

Jesus looks up to heaven and sighs. The man cannot hear the sigh that comes from Jesus but he can see the expression on his face. With our eyes of faith we see the face of Jesus looking up to heaven and sighing. With our eyes of faith we see his face covered with sweat and blood as he prays fervently in the garden. With our eyes of faith we see the anguish on the face

of Jesus as he bears the full wrath for our sin on the cross. With our eyes of faith we see the joy on the face of Jesus as he says to his disciples and to us on the night of his resurrection from the dead, "Peace be to you." And we will see the joy on the face of Jesus as he comes in clouds of glory to take us to the place he has prepared for us.

Jesus looks up to heaven, sighs and then says, "Ephatha!" which means "Be opened." What is the first word this man hears? It is the word that comes from the mouth of Jesus, "Ephatha." You see dear friends, it did not take minutes or even seconds for the miracle to happen. As soon as Jesus spoke these words the ears picked up the sound, the ear drum vibrated, the little bones in the middle ear began to shake and rattle. Vibrations were sent to tiny nerves on the inner ear that went to the brain. And the brain interpreted exactly what the sound was. What power Jesus has!

Jesus has the power to heal all of our diseases, to solve our problems, to ease our burdens and to erase our worries. He not only has that kind of power, he has used it in our lives. How many times have we been sick only to recover? How many times have we been rescued almost miraculously from car accidents? How many times haven't we landed safely in an airplane? How many times haven't we been shielded from the harm of floods, famines, tornadoes and hurricanes? How many of us aren't alive today because Jesus used his power through the hands of a surgeon to spare our lives? Granted, the Savior does not always use his power to relieve our problems or to keep them from us, but if he chooses to let the problem stay or the sorrows come, then always his strength is there in the midst of it. Always his power is there helping us cope and enabling us to bear the burdens of the day. Always he keeps his promise, "As your days, so shall your strength be."

The final thought we want to dwell on this morning is that Jesus is also wonderful in his wisdom. Did you catch the way Jesus shows his wisdom in this story? Mark refers to it when he tells us that "Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone" about this miracle that he had just performed. Why would Jesus do that? Why would he tell people not to go around talking about the power and compassion they had just witnessed? You see, this was a time in Jesus' ministry when everybody wanted him, but they wanted him for the wrong reasons. All they wanted was an earthly king, a miracle worker who would heal all their diseases; someone to fill their bellies with food, their banks with money and their land with peace. Jesus didn't want to fuel that kind of thinking so he "commanded them not to tell anyone." In his heavenly wisdom he knew that those people had a greater need than food on the table and money in the bank. They needed a Savior from sin. They needed someone who would lead them to repentance and bring them to heaven. They were only thinking about today and maybe tomorrow, but Jesus in his wisdom was thinking about eternity and their need to spend it with him. Don't you have to marvel at what a wonderful Savior Jesus is?

Yes, Jesus has done all things well. In fact Jesus does all things perfectly. I wish I could say this morning that these wonderful ears the Lord has given to me have never listened to gossip or other words that are not proper for a child of God to hear. I wish my tongue always spoke good words to people, not harsh words. I wish I was quick to listen and slow to speak as the Word of God tells me in James. Yet, Jesus did all things well. He offered the perfect sacrifice at the cross that cleanses me from all sin, even sins of the ears and the tongue. If there is anyone you should listen to in life, it's Jesus. He is the Ultimate Hearing Aid.