



Sermon
Rev. Lang Yang

“Listen and Seek God”

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
St. Paul Lutheran Church, Caro, MI
8-27-17

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Isaiah 51:1 *“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord.”* This is the Word of God.
(Cross Reference – Romans 9:31; 10:3, Genesis 17:15, Psalm 94:15; 94:15, Proverbs 15:9, Isaiah 46:3; 48:12; 51:7; 65:10; Isaiah 1:1; Isaiah 50:11)

Illustration “Listen” (Show picture of telegraph machine)



Back when the telegraph was the fastest method of long-distance communication, a young man applied for a job as a Morse Code operator. Answering an ad in the newspaper, he went to the office address that was listed. When he arrived, he entered a large, busy office filled with noise and clatter, including the sound of the telegraph in the background. A sign on the receptionist’s counter instructed job applicants to fill out a form and wait until they were summoned to enter the inner office. The young man filled out his form and sat down with the several other applicants in the waiting area. After a few minutes, the young man stood up, crossed the room to the door of the inner office,

and walked right in. Naturally the other applicants perked up, wondering what was going on. They muttered among themselves that they hadn’t heard any summons yet. They assumed that the young man who went into the office made a mistake and would be disqualified. Within a few minutes, however, the employer escorted the young man out of the office and said to the other applicants, “Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming, but the job has just been filled.” The other applicants began grumbling to each other, and one spoke up saying, “Wait a minute, I don’t understand. He was the last to come in, and we never even got a chance to be interviewed. Yet he got the job. That’s not fair!” The employer said, “I’m sorry, but all the time you’ve been sitting here, the telegraph has been sending out the following message in Morse Code: ‘If you understand this message, then come right in. The job is yours.’ None of you heard it or understood it. This young man did so the job is his.”

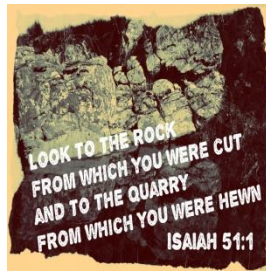
We live in a world that is full of busyness and clatter, like that office. People are distracted and unable to hear the still, small voice of God as he speaks to them. What about you? Are you tuned in to God’s voice? Do you hear him when he speaks to you? Are you listening and seeking God?

I. Our Old Testament reading today said, *“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord.”* (Isaiah 51:1) During the time of the prophet Isaiah it unveils the full dimensions of God’s judgement and it unveils salvation. (Show the prophet Isaiah)



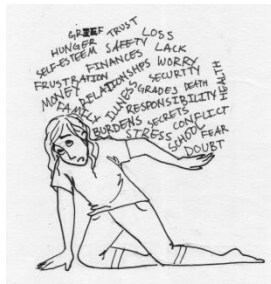
God is “the Holy One of Israel” who must punish his rebellious people but will afterward redeem them. Israel is a nation blind and deaf like a vineyard that will be trampled, a people void of justice or righteousness. In order for God to redeem His people, the prophet Isaiah was sent to proclaim the Good News that

they need to listen and seek the Lord for their everlasting salvation. (Show Isaiah 51:1)



The issue is that man who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord are impossible to find. How can you pursue something that you can't see? In reality what the Scripture really mean is that you need to listen to His word and seek the Lord is for you to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Some of you are listening and seeking something of this earthly thing that you cannot find the fulfillment. Some of you come to church today to see if you can listen to a word of encouragement or seek the Lord for His peace. Isaiah said, *"Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn"* (Isaiah 51:1)

We are like rock that just lay lifeless on the earth. God remind us that we are from Him who created us and form us so we need to listen and seek Him for our salvation. (Show heavy burden)



Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, who do you listen to and who do you seek when it come to salvation? Do you listen to God when He call you to faith and want you to go to the world and proclaim His Good News to others so that other may hear and seek the Lord for their salvation. The problem people have today for not listening and seeking the Lord's grace is that we are too busy for the wealth of this world. We turn our ears and seek for the thing that don't last. When people do this it usually end in frustration, conflict, doubt, and fear. The burden that people carry are heavy and many doesn't know who they can turn to help

them lift their frustration, conflict, doubt, and fear. Even when Jesus said, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* (Matthew 11:28) Some of these people are not listening and seeking God's provision. (Show picture of a cricket)

II. A Native American and his friend were in downtown New York City, walking near Times Square in



Manhattan. It was during the noon lunch hour and the streets were filled with people. Cars were honking their horns, taxicabs were squealing around corners, sirens were wailing, and the sounds of the city were almost deafening. Suddenly, the Native American said, "I hear a cricket." His friend said, "What? You must be crazy. You couldn't possibly hear a cricket in all of this noise!" "No, I'm sure of it," the Native American said. "I heard a cricket." "That's crazy," said the friend. The Native American listened carefully for a moment, and then walked across the street to a big cement planter where some shrubs were growing. He looked into

the bushes, beneath the branches, and sure enough, he located a small cricket. His friend was utterly amazed. "That's incredible," said his friend. "You must have super-human ears!" "No," said the Native American. "My ears are no different from yours. It all depends on what you're listening for." "But that can't be!" said the friend. "I could never hear a cricket in this noise." "Yes, it's true," came the reply. "It depends on what you're listening for. Here, let me show you." (Show coins in hand)



He reached into his pocket, pulled out a few coins, and discreetly dropped them on the sidewalk. And then, with the noise of the crowded street still blaring in their ears, they noticed every head within twenty feet turn and look to see if the money that tinkled on the pavement was theirs. "See what I mean?" asked the Native American. "It all depends on what you're listening for." In the midst of

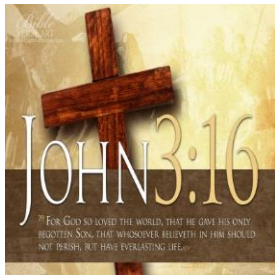
how we don't listen and seek God, Isaiah word encourages us to be bold and hopeful that we will be able to listen and seek God for our hope and our strength that we may obtain righteous and that we live a life and be a light to the nations that other may listen and seek God for their salvation.

(World has turn upside down)



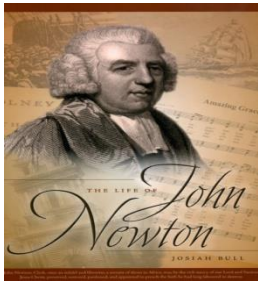
God promises that His salvation will last forever and His righteousness will never fail. But the world has turn upside down from good to evil? Everytime we try, it always seem that temptation overcome us and we tend to turn the opposite way instead of listening to God's Word to strengthen us. How are we suppose to listen and seek God when we are not at peace?

(Show John 3:16)



Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, in the midst of this world, God has already overcome the evil of this world on the cross. Jesus conquer the temptation that you and I are not able to do. He is our strength and Christ invited us to listen to Him, seek Him for all of our problem. How are we to do that? Leave your worldly life style and come to believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Jesus said, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16) We are to believe and trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior more today than yesterday. We

are to listen to His Word where it continue to teach us to live the live according to God's will that it may be pleasing to our heavenly Father and continue to seek God for the knowledge and wisdom that everything we do are done to bring honor and glory to His name. (Show John Newton)



Most of you heard the story of John Newton, the author of the hymn Amazing Grace. We only hear what a wonderful man that God had blessed him with the talent to write such a wonderful hymn that it has been translated to more language than any others hymn in the history of mankind. But the reality is that when John Newton was young he never listen or seek God. He try to do the opposite of what the Scripture say. Everytime when he talk to a person, he would try to persuade or lead that person stray or try to corrupted the person. He spent countless hours of trying to find a new word to curse just to make a point that he did it. He was a

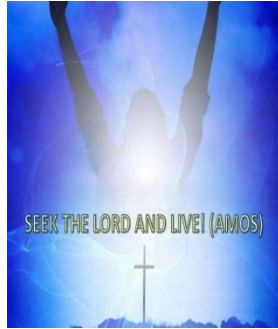
deserter from his Navy and severly punish. He become a slave trader. He later became a slave to another slave dealer and was rescue by a sea captain and was return to England. How did Newton finally listen and seek God grace? After Newton was on his way to England, the ship encounter a severe storm. He woke up in the middle of the night and the ship filled with water. He called out to God. The cargo shifted and stopped the hole and the ship drifted to safety. He began to read the Bible and accept Christ as his savior. From that point on, he avoided profanity, gambling, and drinking. In 1764 he was ordain as priest. In 1779 the hymn Amazing Grace was publish.

III. Do you listen and seek God? Or you rather listen and seek other thing of this world. We know that we have to have the physical thing such as food and shelter but are you listening and seeking God on the spiritual side for your life? Our Old Testament reading today said, *"Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord."* (Isaiah 51:1) (Show God is in control)



Throughout the Bible, the Scripture always encourages God's people to listen and seek God. Even though God had continually provide for His people, the people

always does the opposite by not listening to Him. When people don't listen, God will make sure that they understand that God is still in control. The flood – wipe away the human race for causing sin, the tower of Babel – confusing one language to many languages, the 40 years in the desert – snake bitten for complaining and refusing God's provision, and slave to the Babylonian because of their disobedience. When the people don't listen, God acts so that the people could turn back and seek Him for their comfort, hope, and strength. (Show seek the Lord and live)



The prophet Amos writes, “*Seek the Lord and live. Seek good, not evil, that you may live*” (Amos 5:6, 14) When God saw that the people of this world continued of not listening and seeking Him, He sent His one and only Son to the world. Jesus Christ the Son of God did not have to listen to God. He could have just said, “Let those sinful people be sinful and let them go to hell”. Instead, He listened to the Father, came to earth, born to a virgin, had flesh and blood just like you and I. He went to the cross so that your sins are paid in full and make you righteous in God's eyes. During Jesus' ministry, God continued to tell people to listen to Jesus. (Show transfiguration)



We heard God's voice at Jesus' Transfiguration. God said “**This is my Son**, whom I love; with **him** I am well pleased. **Listen to him!**” (Matthew 17:5, Mark 9:7, Luke 9:35) During Jesus' Ministry, He continued to point people to listen and seek God's salvation. He said, “... *seek first his kingdom and his righteousness...*” (Matthew 6:33) Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ came and seek the lost so that you and I can believe and trust in Him that we may have eternal life.

(Show Bible)



When you read the Word of God, listen to what it says and let it transform you so that you may seek God's will so that you may live the life that is pleasing to Him. And all the things that you do will bring honor and glory to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, because you listen and seek God for His Kingdom of righteousness. Amen. Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Amen