**“Open Ears”**

Acts 16:9-15

Revelation 21:9-14, 21-27

John 16:23-33

 Easter 6, May 21/22, 2022

[Jesus said:] “Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

**He is risen!** He **is risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

**Bridge**

I need to correct the record on something that I told you last weekend (my math or reading abilities flawed, so I need to **correct the fact**). I’d said (last weekend) that (once in Heaven) a believer has (by the math of Revelation-revealed acreage) enough each to equal the state of Tennessee and Kentucky combined. That (I said) is huge, and I think I’d missed the word “**million**” for states acreage and read it as “**thousand**” so got the totals wrong. Our congregation’s engineers corrected me this week. So each believer really has (in Heaven) the equivalent acreage of **half of the city of Columbia and not two full states**. It’s still, though, huge so you have plenty of space to spread out and include with you all of your friends. But half of Columbia makes it Heaven a bit more **communal in size**. And **communal is Good**. It helps us, therefore, **communicate and commune (and more importantly and constantly) that with God the Father**. See, **in Heaven** (and, really, that begun here upon this earth in this lifetime ever since (and because of) Jesus’ victory over Satan upon a cross, **DIALOGUE with the eternal Father** doesn’t require **state-wide travel**, but, still, **good** **conscious and deliberate** **movement**. Yet it’s just a **quick drive**, maybe across town at the furthest. And Jesus has made the **Father’s hearing** good enough to **pick up calls from us only neighborhoods away**. There must be **some travel to Him though (which is a healthy way to think about it). We have to deliberately hear His part of the conversation to, actually, be able to properly converse**. That **conversation, though, is** **ON** since **Christ bridged the gap which had been so firmly entrenched between the Father and us**.

**Text**

That **gap** had been **man-made** yet **bridged** by the celebrated Easter-Season Passion (death and resurrection) of God’s Son (Jesus) made a man as well as God so He could do that). Adam and Eve **hid themselves from God after their sin**. And they did so knowing that they’d forced a **distancing of even communication with the Holy Divinity**. They cut-off God from a regular **communing** with them / **walks in the Garden with God** or in parks like Maury County’s **perfectly in communion and communication with God**. The **profane and even common by sin** and **Divine holiness** couldn’t **intermingle … man had no community with God without it bridged** (sin is the evil that kills and human choice of that knowledge of evil with its death can’t be with the purity of God. Humanity has, for a long while, failed to understand the **cut-off in communication** thatsin (and **sins**) force …

… but Jews didn’t miss it, so Scripture wants to remind us of it. **They** understood the gap, and God never talked to the whole world … and still doesn’t … just through people who He’s made His (that’s the way it’s always been). There’s a shutness of His ears to the common and un-divine that can only be changed by His voice talking and **transmitted to common and profane people by God’s changed people**.

To even **Children of Israel**, God showed grace to them only **for the sake, initially, of** **the “Seed” of the Savior who would come from them in Jesus (both man and God)**. But God’s voice **even** **pained their ears** (we heard of it when they were at Mount Sinai and Moses had to **climb to the top of a mountain** to get to hear Him filtered for His ears. Seeking the Voice of God had never been **simple** since the Fall. There weren’t phone lines reaching His direction, yet (even if there was) His number got to be unlisted to sinners and any trying on their own (the Tower of Babel, for instance) got an answering machine and scattered with no “secretarial” voice to yet mediate a call … they skipped staying close to the promised “Seed”. One message got known to be heard, though, was by that “Seed”. God clarified that He heard His own Son who’d come from Noah and Shem and, then, Abraham’s lineage as, then, a people enslaved in Egypt but them housing the “Seed” of promise of the Savior, God the Father heard. There and wherever God’s Son resided before being born into flesh from the “Seed” (like a Tabernacle or Temple yet mostly in every person in the lineage of Him) He was **God’s Son as the “gleam in a human father’s eye” Who the Heavenly Father had (always) ears open for** … what **never changed**.

The incarnate **Christ (first promised as the “Seed”, then fulfilled in Bethlehem) opened the Father’s ears to all connected to Him and His work**. He **won the opportunity** **on a cross and “in Him” seemingly direct communication with the Father**. The day before He **secured that** **access**, He said of it t**his that we read in the Gospel account:** that **in Him** after **“that day” when His blood would be shed He’d connect the phone lines to the Father for “disciples” who are gathered into Him, baptized and believing, baptized into His death and, therefore, resurrection as it says of the baptized in Romans 6**. **Jesus and His work IS the phone line we “in Him” can use**. “Plainly” He says that (after “**THAT DAY**”) disciples **can** “**ask in His name” and commune and hear and, maybe even, begin to appropriately respond to the Father through the Son as if it’s direct with the Father**”. **Access and communication and, literally, DIALOGUE and communion** happened with of **the work of God on “THAT DAY” (Good Friday and, then, Easter)**.

**Application**

**God the Father’s ears are open to those in His Son** … but, still, communication is not **easy**. Humanity still must be **challenged and plagued by the sins of an (often even with us), unwillingness to pay attention to Him first in the conversation and DIALOGUE**.Still we have trouble **responding, often, in ways that are Good and appropriate according to the desire of the Father**. But communication (and the Father’s ears) are **open** to any **in Christ (connected to His passion)** still needing to be **deliberate though** because (as Jesus says): “the hour is coming, and indeed has come, when **you will be scattered, each to his own home** (differing thoughts about this communing thing with the Father and confusing it with personal feelings and whims possibly quite different); and “you will” (Jesus said) “**leave Me alone**”. However “I have said these things to you that **IN ME** you **may have peace**” (and that’s His biggest plea for us, that we staying “**in Him” and listen so DIALOGUE with the Father along with Him as He does**). “**In the world you will have tribulation (those challenges to the relationship and the conversation and the DIALOGUE that’s communion with God). “But take heart; I have overcome the world.”** ……

Paul found **God’s Voice actually listened to** in **the context that was described in our First Reading from Acts**. Summoned to **Macedonia**, folks wanted **to** **hear God** and **begin** **responding to Him appropriately**, so Paul **went and embedded himself there with God’s Word**.He found seekers **gathered to hear and listen**, a woman named Lydia identified as doing so, “**opening her heart and paying attention to that Word** **there”,** **inviting Paul to stay so that she could hear much more of it**.

I don’t see huge indications that the **world in general uses much of the access Christ won to DIALOGUE WITH GOD “IN HIM”, so I’m not sure how open the Father’s ears are to EVERYONE (how arrogant it seems to be to assume that God owes strangers His open ears when they don’t care to listen to Him first**). So, certainly repentance God hears yet, again, it comes only **as appropriate response to** **having heard from the Lord first (as the beginning of DIALOGUE):** “If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” that God says first, but then “if we confess our sin, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness”.

And **DIALOGUE (God with EVERY MAN) is the desire He has for EVERYONE**: “God wants **ALL** be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1st Timothy says). As we practice the habit of deliberately **going His way to hear Him and learn to respond appropriately** (maybe even **driving across town to purposefully develop the habit of heading His way to listen and learn from Him**), then **DIALOGUE** **and communication and communion with God is yours “in Christ”**. It’s **WHAT** **He died and rose for.** In +His name, Jesus. Amen.