**“I Heard”**

Psalm 1

Jeremiah 17:5-8

1 Corinthians 15:(1-11) 12-20

Luke 6:17-26

 Epiphany 6, Feb. 12/13, 2022

The context for our Gospel reading (from Luke chapter 6) is this: “And He (that is Jesus) came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who **came to hear Him** and to be healed of their diseases.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

In Matthew, chapter 11, verse 16, we’re told that Jesus said: “he who has ears, **let him hear**”. In Matthew 13:9, Jesus said “he who has ears, **let him hear**”. Matthew 13:43: “he who has ears, **let him hear**”. Mark 4:9: “Jesus said, ‘He who has ears to hear, **let him here**”. Mark 4:23: “if anyone has ears to hear, **let him hear**”. Mark 7:16: “if anyone has ears to hear, **let him hear**”. Luke 8:8: Jesus said: ‘He who has ears to hear, **let him hear**”. Luke 14:35: “He who has ears to hear, **let him hear**”. And, then, a “**multitude** from Judea and Jerusalem and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon” , along with everyone gathered here or tuned-in online, “came to **hear Jesus**”.

And all of that is **Good and proper**, so spoken of **favorably** in all those texts and in the Gospel for today: **people “having ears to hear** **gathering** **to do so**”. Jesus insists upon it … and, by the content of what He preached here and is preached all through our lessons, it’s also insisted upon (or, at least, hoped for) that we’d **act properly from what we hear; that we’d choose rightly the proper path**.

The “Tale of Two Ways” shows that we can respond **one of two ways after hearing**. The **one (the proper and best) way** is in righteousness / in blessedness, with everything that’s promised to come with that. The **counter choice** is for unrighteousness and woe / for evil with cursed consequences as, really, the only other option no matter how pale evil looks while yet in this world. As Paul will point out in 1st Corinthians (among other things), this option is **apart** from the hope of a **Good resurrection**. It’s, just, not **of IT**.

**Text**

“To him who has ears to hear, **let him, indeed,** **hear**”; and, then, **choose directions wisely**.

**We’re** gathered **to “hear”**, even if that’s **“hearing” over the airwaves of the internet**. I know that there is great temptation to **not “hear”**. It’s Super Bowl weekend and “hearing” things of **that** is what’s highly promoted. Covid’s Omicron variant is challenging the “hearing” thing. And there are many **messages** out there … a plethora of **ideas** that may or may not be the voice of Jesus … so “hearing” is challenged.

Last week we had to “hear” through elders because I caught the Covid bug. Pastor Craig jumped in to help with Sunday, stumbling himself to catch enough breath or strength to be “heard”, yet (even with all of that) it was still the **same Word of Jesus we brought our ears to “hear” … and did**.

The **Good News first this week**, “**Blessed** **ARE you poor**” (of which Jesus meant the **challenged to “hear” and yet doing-so and of hope**, **repentant / “poor in spirit” apart from forgiveness but knowing where to find it and being willing-to in God’s mercy**), “for yours **IS**” (and that’s not “**might be**”, but “**IS**”) the kingdom of God” … what **Great News to “hear”**. “**Blessed ARE** you who are hungry now” (and that’s almost entirely **hunger to “hear” God’s Word in Christ**), “for you” (**those that-way hungry**) “shall **be satisfied**”. “**Blessed ARE** you who weep now, for you shall laugh”. **Hope even in weeping** (in other words) **uplifts**. “**BLESSED** **ARE YOU** **EVEN** **WHEN** people hate you and exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, **on account of the Son of Man!** **Rejoice in that day**; **leap for joy**, for **your reward is great in heaven**; for so their fathers (**those** evil-doers) did to the prophets”.

Jeremiah has God recorded saying: “**BLESSED** **IS THE MAN WHO** trusts in the Lord, whose trust **is the Lord**. He is **like** a tree **planted** **by water**, that sends out its roots by the stream, and **does not fear when heat comes**, for its **leaves remain green**, and **is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit**” … **no matter what!**

The Psalms **begin**: “**BLESSED** **IS THE MAN WHO** walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but **his delight is in the law of the Lord**, and **on His law he meditates day and nigh**t. He is **like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season**, and its leaf does not wither**. In all that he does, he prosper**s”, or **benefits**. The **BLESSED are made to be that way. It’s the gift of the Gospel HEARD AND RECEIVED**. **Enjoy that blessedness**. **Rejoice in it / do not** **stray from it**. Hear it again and again and again “He who has **ears to hear**, **let him hear**” …

And “hear” also that the **other side of that pathway decision is “evil” and “wicked”. “Woe to” Jesus, and all of Scripture, says**. The bad news … the only bad news … is being **outside of the Good News** / to be **not called “blessed” or to not walk (or live) joyfully in that “blessedness” … maybe “not hearing it” and, maybe, losing it … since we can**.

“Blessedness’” opposite is “cursed” … and only that. There’s no in-between place between “blessed” and “accursed”; it’s **one OR the other**. There is no neutral ground / no in-between spot of gray area. One is **of** and **walking-in** just **one of two available paths**, and, **of that**, please, “He who has **ears to hear**, **let him hear” it**.

## Application

I’ve told some of you about a man I visited before he died. His wife (a believer) had asked me to see him, worried about his choice (he believed himself headed nowhere, buried and non- existent after death, neutral and neither “blessed” nor “cursed”, **he thought**). This man is my “**face**” and “**voice**” for the **bad decision that Jesus and Scripture warns of. This man ignored Good … maybe never really “heard” it, nor listened, so chose against the Good of it**. He had “ears to hear” yet chose against “listening” (or really “hearing”) the **Good News of the BLESSED GIFT of ETERNAL LIFE**. For guys like him (people like him), Paul gets to the real **crux of the matter**. The **context** for the Epistle that we heard is from the **first part of 1st Corinthians chapter 15 (the Good News of the Gospel to be, indeed, heard)**:

“Now I would remind you, brothers, of the **Gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you’re being saved, if you hold fast to the Word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain**.

“For I delivered to you as of **first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was** **raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. The He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, He** **appeared also to me**. For I am the least of the apostles, **unworthy to be called an apostle** because I persecuted the church of God. But **BY THE GRACE OF GOD I AM WHAT I AM, and HIS GRACE TOWARD ME WAS NOT IN VAIN**. On the contrary, I **worked harder** than any of them, though it was **not I, but the grace of God that is with me**. Whether then it was I or they, **so we preach and so you believed**” …

… and of **THAT**, please “(**ANYONE**) who has ears to hear, **let him hear**.” ….

How great it would have been to have **been at that “level place”, hearing Jesus and seeing the “power coming out from Him”**. **We are gathered to hear Him**. In +Jesus’ name. Amen.