

I. Paul looked intently at the man...his eyes were opened to seeing people. vs. 9

- He did not just teach, walk around or engage in pleasantries. He gazed intently, deeply, compassionately at the man. He saw him, not just with his eyes, but with his heart. As He looked at the man Jesus was stirring His heart. Do we see people like this? When we are out and about in the neighborhood, the store or with extended family, do we really see people? I struggle to see people at times. Well, maybe more than just at times. How did Jesus look at people?

- Luke 19 - Jesus saw the sinner Zacchaeus and pursued him. He looked intently at him. He had dinner with him, talked with him, and listened to him. Look at the last verse...He came to seek and save the lost...this is you, me and Zacchaeus...He pursued us and saved us. **Because we have been seen (and subsequently rescued), we can see.** He has opened our eyes to His heart and when we see His heart we begin to see and have compassion on others. So do we? When we were at the mall with some of the women at the church last week, I saw these ladies actually see people. They would talk to them because they saw them. Many of those who we talked to probably felt as if nobody ever sees them. These ladies were not arrogant or presumptuous, they were probably insecure and more afraid, but they knew that their identity was in Christ (the One who had seen them). They had to be reminding themselves and each other of the love of Christ, so they could see people where they were at. It was so encouraging to watch. I actually feel like I failed that night, (story) but I know God loves me still.

- We are called to live out of our story of salvation and grace. How God saw us from the beginning of time and even though we were rebellious and sinful, He pursued us with the ferocious, undeserving love of Jesus. Because of this, we can ask that we see others with His eyes. God open our eyes to see the least of these among us. Who are the least of these? When we understand that we are the least of these saved by the perfect Father, we can begin to have a heart for the orphans and widows, the poor and the hurting, the sick and the unlovely, the depressed and the empty! Why? Because those descriptors apply to us. God please give us Your eyes.

II. Paul and Barnabas stayed for a long while...long suffering with the people. vs. 1-3

- They not only saw people, but they stayed with people even while being persecuted. They did not give up on the people, but gave themselves for the sheep, even though it was dangerous. This is called love and long suffering. Does this sound familiar? Jesus loves us and stays with us no matter what! What about when we choose idols over him? What about when we cheat on him with other things? What about when we blatantly disobey? HE NEVER LEAVES. Relationships with people can be extremely difficult (emotionally, circumstantially & spiritually), but we stay, because Jesus stays with us. I

know some of the ladies that went to mall said they were going to check back in on those they prayed with. Even when this feels out of the way or super time consuming we can go, because the Holy Spirit pursued us and now stays with us! Maybe it's a neighbor who you know talks SO much, but you can love them by listening. When we see people with His eyes we will have more energy to stay, even when it gets tough.

III. Paul saw that the man had faith to be healed..the Holy Spirit speaks and leads. vs. 9

- Paul saw or realized the man had faith to be healed. How in the world did he know this? The only feasible answer to this question is that God told him. So the next question is, how did Paul hear God speak? Have you wondered that before? Did he hear a voice? Was it audible or in his head? Was it loud or a whisper? Was it a voice at all or was it a sense or feeling? Did he have a dream the night before were he saw this man? When he was praying that morning did God put a picture in his mind of this crippled man? Did he get a word of knowledge or prophetic utterance right there on the spot? Well, can I be honest? I have no idea how Paul heard God speak in that instance. But I know this...God speaks and Paul heard. That encourages me to ask Him to open my ears! Remember, all throughout scripture we see God speaking to people? He speaks in a hundred different ways and speaks uniquely to different people. Here are just a few examples:

1. A dream or vision - Job 33:14-18
2. A voice in a trance - Acts 10:9-16
3. The "sound of many waters" - Rev. 1:15
4. The audible voice of God. - Exodus 3:4
5. **God's written word (Primary source)** Psalm 119
6. Holy Spirit speaking to a group - Acts 13:2
7. Spirit bearing witness with our spirit - Romans 8:16
8. Men declaring God's voice - 2 Peter 1:21
9. Words and Physical metaphors to prophets - Jeremiah 18:1-6
10. Heavenly experiences - 2 Corinthians 12:1-4
11. God's own Son - Hebrews 1:2
12. Angels - Luke 1
13. **Voice - Psalm 29:3-11**

(Some of these examples are cited from *The Beginner's Guide to Hearing God* by James Goll.)

These examples demonstrate to us that God speaks. Since we know that God speaks, how can we better hear him today? Do we really want to hear God and even converse with Him? If so, here are a few things to think about. Remember, Paul heard God. Also, please understand that there are no formulas. Do not look for the perfect thing that you can do to cause God to speak, or to cause your ears to open. God speaks and He opens our ears. In the bible, He speaks to different people in different ways, but He is always speaking. How can we hear Him?

1. The Word - As we read our bible, His words are in us and running through us and will come out of us. We will have more opportunity to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit in specific situations that arise in life, if we are meditating on the word regularly. **We don't just want to check a box, but we want to gaze intently at scripture and interact with God in the scriptures.** Remember when Jesus told the pharisees that they had the scriptures, but they were missing the God of the scriptures. They were not interacting with God as they read, they were just reading and then doing what they thought best. Some of us today need to repent because we either are not reading the word or we are reading it without interacting with God. **A lot of times we do not hear subjectively from God, because we are not grounded in the objective "word!"** Because we are not grounded in the word its hard to have a gauge to judge what we are sensing, hearing, feeling or thinking. Colossians 3:16 - Let the word of Christ richly dwell within...
2. Confess unbelief and skepticism - Some of us just flat out do not believe he speaks personally to us. But listen to what Isaiah says - Isaiah 30:21 - "And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left." Listen to what Jesus says in Revelation 3:20 - "I will come in and share a meal as friends." How about David in Psalm 27:8 - "My heart has heard you say, come and talk with me. My heart responds I am coming." (NLT) Some of us need to confess that we believe God only speaks through his word. But in His Word He speaks so many different ways.
3. Stop - most of us are so busy with life or we are trying to earn something from God that we never really stop to hear Him. Stop and wait. Do we ever sit down and quietly wait for the Lord to speak?
4. Listen - When we stop, do we listen or do we do all the talking? This is a big one in our relationship with God and with each other. Some of us love to talk all the time. We love to have answers for people. When is the last time in a group setting you actually just listened? You humbly allowed others to talk? It's the same with God. When we talk all the time we can't hear. Some of us need to run to God and confess that we talk more than we listen. When we stop and listen how will He speak? I can't tell you for sure how He will speak to you, but I know because of His Word that He will speak. It is promised for those in Christ.
5. Practice - Hebrews 5:14 - "But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil". We have to be in constant practice. This relationship takes time and does not just happen overnight. Practice hearing and then step out in faith. Simon Holly says there is never failure when we step out, only obedience to love people. The ladies at the mall were all practicing and some saw immediate fruit and others learned to step out no matter what the result.

Today we are focusing on the fact that God speaks. I am wanting to encourage you above all else today, to run to God and ask Him to open your eyes and ears to who He is. In this place we are compelled to go out! We are not going to look at the issue of faith and healing. Should we pray for healing or just speak healing? If we pray for healing and someone is healed, does that mean I can always pray and God will always heal? This would take an entire sermon or more to discuss. For more detailed teaching on the gift of faith and healing please go and read the notes or listen to the sermon on 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 by Sam Storms, which can be found at the following link:

<http://www.bridgewaychurch.com/sermons/sermon/2011-11-06/faith--healing--and-miracles:-a-trio-of-misunderstood-gifts>

IV. Paul recognized it was all from God and that he was a mere human. vs. 15

- Paul and Barnabas were being elevated by the people after they saw this healing. This can either open the door to pride or we can walk in humility. When we begin to hear from God, it can be so easy to take credit for a healing or a word or it can even become our identity. Paul loudly proclaimed that this was all about God and that the people should turn to God. Humility is the final step in hearing from God. Do we realize we are just like Paul. We are able to hear from God. Believe that truth today and when God speaks and amazing things happen, make sure we direct all the praise back to Him. Let's not let prophecy or healing or words of knowledge become our identity. Let's keep our identity fully placed in the cross of Christ and what was accomplished on our behalf while enjoying His gifts!

Conclusion:

When we interact with God and realize His goodness we are compelled to go out and minister to others. When we hear from Him we can see people. When we look intently at people we can see their need and see how God can meet them and utterly change their lives. When we see Him do the miraculous (healing, word of knowledge, or salvation), let's not get puffed up with ourselves, let's turn and point to the one who gives these good gifts!

There are many ways we can repent this morning. As Christians we say that what makes us different from other religions, is that we have a relationship with God. Does your walk with God feel like a relationship? So often mine does not. I am asking Him to speak and to open my eyes and ears to Him first, and then to people all around me. It is so good to hear Him and then to see Him work through us in others. When He speaks and we hear, we will get to see Him do some amazing things. Let's ask individually and as a group, that we could hear His voice today!