

Coach House Church BEACONS

BE CAREFUL HOW YOU HEAR

13TH MAY 2020

Let me ask you a question. How does this Beacons come to you? I've no idea. I know I prepare the message, and I save it on my laptop – not sure how that works, apparently in a Cloud somewhere. Then I record my voice speaking it and I email this little sound file to Jamie, and somehow it travels through the airwaves, and lo and behold, whatever Jamie does with it, somehow it appears on the website for you to listen to. I can't explain what's happening. I do know there's a message, and I know that as long as you have the means of picking up the message and you are willing to listen, that message will get through. So it is with God. My last Beacons talk was about God speaking. He's got a message – all the time, every day, He's definitely speaking. But how does the message get through? How do we hear? How can we accurately train our spiritual senses to pick up what He's saying?

We see from the bible that some people clearly heard God, audibly heard his voice, and saw visions of amazing, heavenly things. So if they did, can't we? They were normal humans – like us – it's just they were open to hearing from their Creator.

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Some people -The Prophets – were especially assigned by God to see and hear, to be a go between, a bridge, between God and the people. So they were especially trained to see and hear. For example God appointed Jeremiah as a prophet, from a young age – in fact, it says before he was formed in the womb, God called him to this work. There's a whole book of the bible devoted to recording the messages God gave him for the people. But God still had to train him - God had a training programme specially for him. The first chapter of Jeremiah records one of Gods training sessions. Jeremiah says "the word of the

Lord came to me: What do you see Jeremiah" "I see the branch of an almond tree" I replied. The Lord said to me, "You have seen correctly". And God goes on to set him a few more "seeing" assignments – until God is confident that Jeremiah can be relied upon to see and hear correctly and pass an accurate message to the people.

That was in Old Testament days. But now, in the New Testament, although there are still some people specifically called by God to be Prophets, it says all believers can prophesy – that is, all believers can hear the voice of God or see what He is saying, not necessarily to direct the course of nations, but for the purpose of encouraging and building ourselves and others up, and having direction for our day to day lives.

But we too need a training programme. How do we begin to train our eyes and ears to hear from God?

Well, to start with, we need to recognise that we're all different. Any teacher will tell you that individual students take in information in different ways. Some by seeing, some by hearing, some by practical demonstration, some by the written word. A good, well rounded lesson will include all of these methods so that each student can pick up the message in a way that best suits them. So, likewise, God speaks to us in different ways. Some are more verbal and pick up information through words – so God may speak to you primarily through the written word of the bible. But others are more visual, so God may speak to you in pictures, through something practical, giving a message through our eyes. Sometimes that's our physical eyes, sometimes the inner eye, our imagination – the bible calls this the eyes of our heart. Others again, pick up information through quietly listening to the still small voice of God speaking to them, in words, inwardly.

So where do you begin? Or how do you refresh yourself, if you feel a bit rusty with directly listening to God. After all, it's easy to get used to others speaking to us ABOUT God, at church, or online – or dare I say it, even in the Beacons! – but not listening to God for ourselves

Well, I think the best starting point is to train your ear with Scripture – get familiar with the Voice behind the written words of the Bible. This will give you a firm foundation to work from. Nothing that God speaks will ever contradict his written word – so this will really stop you from being deceived and kidding yourself you are hearing from God when really, it's your own desires you are picking up. As you

read, be prepared to hear God speak – whether through the words on the page, or maybe as he brings to mind how this particular scripture applies to you.

Secondly, to hear to Gods voice, we need to quieten our own inner voice – the voice of busyness, pleasure, care and anxiety. In the gospel of Luke, it tells the parable of the sower, you probably know it. It's a picture story and it says that the good news of God is like seed being sown by a farmer. Some seed falls on the path, some on stony ground, and some is choked by weeds. Jesus explains, "The seed that falls among weeds stands for those who HEAR, but as they go on their way, the seed is choked by life's worries riches and pleasures, and they do not mature". The word of God is still good seed, fertile seed – and the person heard it. It could produce a fantastic harvest. It's just that it got choked by the issues of life, and never reached its potential.

So, as we have time to be still, it's a good opportunity to look at our priorities, and see if we may be choking the word of God, not allowing it to work in our lives. A bit of strong weed killer might not go amiss!

Next, think about training your eyes. Jeremiah was asked what he could see. And he told God what he could see – the branch of an almond tree. What we don't know is whether this was something that he saw with his physical eyes – he might have been walking along, and God pointed out a particular tree among all the other trees and bushes. Or was it something he saw in his mind's eye? Who knows? God may use either or both to speak to you. So, slow down – God may speak through the everyday things around you. Moses saw a burning bush – it happens in the heat of the desert. But he didn't just walk on by – he came near to see. Isaiah saw a vision of the Throne of God – clearly not something in the physical realm. And it changed his life. Be open to what God may say through a simple thing like a bush, a bird, water boiling; but also to visions of heaven! Anything is possible with God.

While we're on the subject of seeing, there's an old children's song "Be careful little eye what you see". Try to avoid soiling your eyes with things that should never be seen. Do you really want to see unbridled violence and brutality in your living room? Think about what you watch on TV or online - there's a deluge of stuff we wouldn't dream of looking at in reality. I'm not trying to be a prude – and we all need a bit of entertainment – but it's just that once seen, these images imprint themselves on your inner eye. If you keep your eyes clean, it will make it so much easier to see what God's showing you

In Luke 11 v 35 it says "Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy your whole body also will be full of light. But when they are unhealthy, your body also is full of darkness. See to it then that the light within you is not darkness" I think this passage shows there's a right and wrong way to see. How are you interpreting what you see and hear? Do you interpret with eyes filled with light, with love, and hope and faith? Or do you see the world through a lens of darkness, doom and gloom, and low expectations? Do you always think the worst, of situations or people? If you always interpret things in a negative way, ask God to wash your eyes, and give you a new way of interpreting what you see through His light.

Finally, start small – as you listen, you will be given more. In Luke 8 v 18, Jesus says

"consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken away from them".

That's shocking! It seems so unfair. But this is a principle of the Kingdom of Heaven – be faithful in little, and you will be given much. If you're not faithful in little – you may lose even the little bit you started with. So be faithful with the little things you hear – and if God seems to say do something, forgive someone, be kind, knock on a neighbour's door – just do it! It's part of your training programme. The stakes are small – if you are wrong, its probably no big deal. Little by little, as you faithfully try to act on what you think you hear, God will trust you with more. You may be a prophet in the making. But for all of us, as with Jeremiah, let's start small. Happy listening!



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