

Title: Take care how you hear  
Text: Luke 8.16-18  
Theme: The effect of God's Word  
Series: Luke  
Prop Stmtnt: The Word of God brings the greatest joy or the worst judgment.

Tympanomastoidectomy ("tim-PAN-oh-mas-toyd-ECK-tuh-mee") is a surgical procedure designed to treat frequent ear infections that have damaged the eardrum and surrounding tissue. Seriously, can't you find a simpler name? The name is 20 letters long. But the reason the name is so long is because this procedure is actually the combination of two other procedures. This is what happens when ENT people take coffee breaks together. What do you get when you combine tympanoplasty with mastoidectomy? Tympanomastoidectomy, of course! I did a bit of research on this because my grandson Titus had this procedure on Friday. When I was told that he was going to have a Tympanomastoidectomy, I felt the urge to panic since the name just sounds so serious. The procedure is not considered to be that serious, but we all know that our ability to hear is very precious and we try to protect that or regain that if at all possible. But hearing with our ears is not nearly as important as hearing God's Word with our hearts. This is the most important, most significant, most valuable issue – ever. Jesus just told a parable because most of those who listened to him did not listen with their hearts even as he told them a parable about how important it was to hear with your heart. The parable was of course, the 4 different types of soil (or hearts) that the seed (God's Word) lands on. The hard ground produces nothing. The rocky ground and thorny ground show some initial promise, but in the end, there is no long-term fruit. The good soil describes *"those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience."*

Whenever I preach on texts that deal with genuine faith, like I did last week, it seems that those who are most concerned about this, are concerned because they are truly tender and responsive to God's Word while those who tend to be dismissive of it, are the very ones who need to take it to heart. How do I know if my heart is like the 4<sup>th</sup> kind of soil? I want to hear God's Word with my heart. I do not want to be deceived into thinking that I am a believer when I'm not. How can I know? Jesus anticipated this response and concern.

Read Text:

This brief text has four explanations and one command. The one command (18a) helps us understand the point of the explanations. The command is: "Take care then how you hear." Jesus is still talking about how you hear the word of God (end of v.11).

### **1. The Evidence (16)**

How can I know if the soil of my heart is good? The evidence of good soil is seen in what you do with the Word. Jesus changes the metaphors. He now describes the Word of God as a light. The one who hears the word of God with the heart will display the Word. Verse 16 is describing the positive aspect of light. Light helps you see the path to follow and the pitfalls to avoid. Light

helps you stay away from danger and can calm your fears. Since Jesus is the Word of God in the flesh and describes himself as the light of the world, then how we respond to God's Word is one and the same to how we respond to Jesus. So, the evidence of genuine faith is seen in that...

**A. You do not hide the light.**

You are not embarrassed about Jesus nor the Word. Would you have concerns about a girl or a guy who is embarrassed to wear their wedding ring? Yes! Should you be concerned if you do not esteem Christ or his Word in your life? Are there people who know you who would be kind of shocked that you claim to be a Christian? Lights in the 1<sup>st</sup> century world were all some sort of flame. No one lit a lamp and then stuck it in a jar or worse, put it under a bed where it would set the bed on fire. You don't light a lamp in order to cover it so that you would be in darkness. You light a lamp so that you can see. You light a lamp in order to benefit from the light and so others benefit from it. How many times do we say "I'll leave the light on for you."

**B. You display the light so others can see.**

A few days ago, I was at a business where I thought that one of the employees had a Bible on his desk. The desk was not easy to see from my angle (meaning I am short), so I wasn't sure, but thought I would ask next time. When I went back a couple of days later, I saw a workbook of sorts, so I asked him what he was studying. Immediately he said, "Ephesians." The workbook was sitting on the Bible. He had no idea I was a pastor who loved Ephesians, but said it with such forthrightness that it was clear that he was excited about it, much less sheepish. As it turned out, he was working on some lessons for a VBS he was serving in. I loved the fact that there was no hesitancy at all about displaying the light of God's Word. That's one way to display God's Word, but Jesus is describing a life where there is clear evidence of the impact of God's Word. A person who is committed to prioritizing God's Word will reflect its life and light. The evidence (v.16) links to the effect of God's Word (v.17). But before we move to that verse, I need to ask you something.

Do you make any effort to display God's Word in and through your life? If so, how? How do you display God's Word? Jesus said that a heart with good soil will bear fruit with patience. What does a life look like that is being impacted by the Word of God over the long haul? Hang on to that for a minute, I will come back to it. The evidence of holding fast to God's Word is seen in one displaying it like a light. A light shines (great), but that means that it also exposes and that is a threat to many. That is the effect of God's Word.

**2. The Effect (17)**

Here is the picture. The person who truly loves Christ and his word, is the person who understands that he/she needs the light in order to know what to believe and how to live. The person who loves his/her sin is threatened by the light because the light exposes. Nothing is hidden from the light. Nothing is hidden from the light of God's Word. Nothing. God's Word is a light that exposes everything. Hebrews 4.11-12 says that "*the word of God is living and active,*

*sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”* Every thought and every motive is exposed by God’s Word. It all comes out. It is all known. *“And no creature is hidden from his sight.”* No creature. That includes you and me. Jeffrey Epstein thought he could live above God’s Word and law. So did Bernie Madoff, Larry Nassar and Ravi Zacharias. Money, influence or even religious respect will not stop the light of God’s Word from exposing our lives. When we cover our sin, get angry when we are exposed, make excuses for it, we are pretending that we are above God’s law. God’s Word is a light that exposes everything, even our thoughts and intentions. Hebrews 4.13 talks about everything being exposed because we will give an account. The worst thing that could ever happen to you is not that your sin is exposed. The worst thing is that you die before it is exposed. Because it will be exposed. Either it is confessed now and forgiven or it deceives you and destroys you. Jesus is describing what it means to follow him. People who follow him practicing dragging things from darkness into the light. They allow the light of God’s Word to shine in their lives and expose everything. Those who are not followers, try to keep things in darkness.

If you are in turmoil because you are trying to hide your sin, please make the connection. You and sin are not good friends. You are in a toxic relationship with sin. Sin is your ultimate abuser who wants to control you, dehumanize you, rot you from the inside out and damn you, if possible. If sin was a facebook friend, you would block it. Sin lies to you all the time. It says that that it will be our little secret. No one needs to ever find out. You can manage it and quit whenever you want. It’s really not that bad. After all, look at how many people are doing so much worse. Besides, you need a diversion, an outlet for your stress, some decompressing. Jesus says that every secret will be known and come to light. Who do you believe? It is a mercy of God for our sin to be exposed now, so that we can repent and find mercy, grace, forgiveness, wholeness and restoration.

One summer, when I was about 9, I earned a certificate for marksmanship at camp. I thought I was pretty special. After I got home, I impressed myself by posing in the mirror aiming my bb-gun. It was a nice mirror with the picture of clipper ship on the top. I remember it well for a reason. There was no BB in the gun, I thought, only to find out differently when I pulled the trigger and ruined the mirror. I knew I was in deep weeds and would obviously lose my gun. So, I took my marksmanship certificate and proudly displayed it on my mirror in order to cover the big hole from the BB. That worked for about 3 months. Cathi and I have received so many nice cards from so many of you expressing your sympathy over the death of my mom and telling us how sweet she was, which she was much of the time. However, I had honed the ability to bring out a part of her that most never saw and I will never forget that night when she discovered what I’d done. My secret was found out. What is done in secret will be exposed.

If you are hearing God’s Word and holding it fast in an honest and good heart, what will be the impact? What will the fruit be over the long haul. One who is deeply influenced by God’s Word is going to be marked by the following:

- Living under authority

I live in submission to God and to the authorities that God has set up. I am not my own law.

- Living under control

God's Word functions like a governor on my life, appetites, impulses and words. Are you out of control? Are there things in your life that you feel powerless over? Like your temper? Like your eating habits? Like your spending? Like your thought life? Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit because the Spirit uses the Word as a convicting and calming influence in my life.

- Living without excuses

Since God's Word exposes my sins, I am free to admit the truth about my sin. Confession is saying what God says about my life. I can take full responsibility for my actions and I can own that. I can own that because of the gospel. Christ has died for my sin. I have trusted in him and he has forgiven me. I am free to admit my sin because it is forgiven. Related to that...

- Living without secrets

God's Word exposes, but it also heals. It reveals, but it also restores. It tells me the truth about me and the truth about Jesus. That's the great news! If God only revealed my sin, I would be hopeless. But God reveals my sin and he reveals my Savior so that I know that when I admit what is in my life, I can find in Christ forgiveness because he died for me. He died to pay for my sin, every single one. That frees me. I can live without secrets. That is what our congregation and relationships are to feel like. What you see is what you get. God is light, in him there is no darkness. Therefore, we are to be the light of the world. We are to be transparent and a life under the influence of God's Word is going to be like that.

- Living without major inconsistencies

No one is perfect at this, but Jesus. I preach better than I live, but by God's grace there is not a big gap. When the Word governs the entirety of our lives then we are one, we are a whole person and a whole church. We are not different people in different settings. We are the same. What our kids see at home, is what we are at work, or school, or on-line.

- Living with humility

God's Word reminds me that he is the King. He is the greatest. He deserves the attention and worship, not me. Left on my own, I am a mess. My hope and confidence is in Christ, not me. We are not our own Savior.

- Living without fear

God's Word reminds me that he is good and he is great and he is carrying out his good plan and if this good and great God is for us, who can be against us? If he did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us how will he not also with him graciously give us all that will ever need?

- Living with confidence

God's Word gives peace, assurance, confidence because it is in him. A life that is being renewed by God's Word is fresh, renewed and hopeful. I am secure because I don't have to prove myself. Jesus did that.

- Living with joy

Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of God and in his law, he meditates day and night.

Jesus is speaking to an audience, some of whom are famously and tragically hypocrites. At the same time, he is talking to his disciples. Through them, the church will be founded in his name that will be at times, unbelievably powerful and beautiful and then hypocritical and devastating. It all has to do with the fact that God's Word is the most precious commodity – ever. And because it is so precious and powerful, there is a temptation to abuse it. Therefore, at all times, for all people, take care then how you hear.

### 3. The Response (18a)

This is the command. Give careful attention to how you hear God's Word. James speaks to this when he says that we are to hear God's Word with a view of addressing our own hearts. Hearing God's Word is part of the relationship. We hear God AND we respond to God. How many of you have said to your spouse, "did you hear a thing I said?" Why did you say that? You said that because you said something and there was no change. You got no response. God speaks through his Word. Are you hearing anything? Are you doing anything with it? Do you plan to take this to heart and chew on it and submit to it or is God in a position of saying, "did you hear a thing I just said?" God gives us his Word to change us from the inside out. Therefore, we listen in order to be changed. Take care then how you hear.

Why has God formed the church? He formed the church because our lives as believers are to be shaped by the Word as it reverberates in and through the congregation. It is the church that is tasked with preaching the Word and the church that is charged with hearing the Word so that we can help one another hear it, understand it and apply it. Taking care then how you hear it means to listen, discuss and apply as a congregation. Help one another by talking about what you have heard.

### 4. The Results (18b)

- A. **More will be given to those who hear and take it to heart.**

When you hear God's Word and take it to heart, there is a freshness, a hunger, a sensitivity, and insight that you gain and grow in. Beloved, God has put people in your life who need wisdom and insight. You can be a grace of God in them by staying engaged with God's Word. But...

**B. What has been heard will be taken away by those who don't.**

There is no neutral. When you slow down your intake of God's Word, you lose your edge. You lose your joy and you get bitter. There are some long-term believers in this church who have only grown sweeter. There are also some long terms believers who were like a tomato that stayed on the vine a little too long. What's the difference? Every time it is the same thing. It is hearing God's Word that creates a hunger to hear it more, or neglecting God's Word that is replaced with distractions, like the news, the weather, sports and the stock market that will leave you empty and actually rather lonely.

Conclusion:

1. Prioritize the hearing of God's Word. (priority of expositional preaching)
2. Plan to meditate on what you heard with others so you can guard it by remembering it. (hearing God's Word is intended to be congregational)
3. Be specific in your obeying God's Word. (There is a dangerously false security and false justification in knowing a lot of theology without true heart change. Information without humble application produces a destructive self-justification.)