

Father this morning we come to You. As we come to the ministry of Your Word Father, I pray You will touch us. I speak peace, stillness in every heart Lord; even the babies. That we may hear the voice of the living God O Master. We need to hear from You Lord in difficult times, more than ever before we need to hear from You. We need direction. As individuals, as families, as a church we need direction because we are going, the whole world is going, in a direction it has never known. You alone have gone ahead of us. Show us Your ways, teach us Your paths. Give us discernment to make right decisions. Touch our ears that we might hear Lord and believe and obey. Speak Father. For in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The promise for the church for this new year don't forget is from *John 7:38* where God says,

John 7:38

³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

God has promised us that if we believe, (according to the Scriptures), "Life will flow from us." But if it has to flow from us remember He has to fill us first. So, that is the promise. He will fill us to the overflow that our lives start impacting other, we are not just blessed but we become a blessing to others. That's the Abrahamic blessing. Like I had said last week, the Holy Spirit is represented through different symbols in the Bible. He's represented as fire, as the one who refines, the one who brings purity in our inner beings, He's represented as oil that brings healing, who comforts, who consecrates. He's represented as water, life giving, cleansing, life changing. He's represented as the dove, gentle, peaceful, the one who guides, the one who warns. He's represented as the wind in the Bible signifying the power and the authority of God.

So, at different times in life, we need different ministries of the same Holy Spirit. That's why we need discernment. The Holy Spirit unlike the other two of the trinity is designated through different symbols because we need different ministries of the same Spirit at different stages of our life. That's why we study the Word of God, because it is through the Word of God we receive the discernment as to what we actually need. When Jesus voluntarily subjected Himself to the Father as Jesus voluntarily subjected Himself to the Father, we need to realize from Scripture, the Holy Spirit (though He's equal to the Father and the Son), has also voluntarily subjected Himself to the Word, to the Son. Therefore, by understanding and obeying the Word of God, (please do not misunderstand. We are not trying to control the Holy Spirit, we can never but) we allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives.

There's an illustration given by an old man of God. It was quite interesting. He said, "There was this river flowing down the mountains and the side of the mountain people gathered and build homes and the town grew and everything. And then came this brilliant engineers and they said, 'Let's build a dam and harness it's power and then we will flourish.' So, few years later the dam was built, the river was dammed up and suddenly, instead of the river flowing, there was just a trickle that is coming in and a few years later, things all started changing over there and what happened is, the river they dammed burst open somewhere far away and this place was now where trickle and the town was slowly drying up and on the other side a new town began and then the expert committee gathered over here. They had a new committee to discuss the pros and cons of the dam and why the river had dried up now. And little later in the other town, a few years later another expert committee decided and they said, 'Let's build a dam.'" The whole illustration was that, you cannot dam the Holy Spirit. You try it, He will spring up somewhere and all you are left with is a theology. That's what happened to every denomination.

They created a theology about the Holy Spirit and said, "Our theology is the right one. This is the way the Holy Spirit operates." After sometime they became dry and the Holy Spirit appeared in another place. And the Holy Spirit worked there for some time and they decided, "This is the only way the Holy Spirit will work," they also created a dam and little later, they found He was in another place. Nobody controls the Holy Spirit. That's why Jesus said, "The wind blows where it pleases." This is the greatest danger, every denomination from the beginning has made. They thought you could control the Holy Spirit and God says, "Nobody controls My Spirit." Therefore, understand the difference between the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the occult. The occult and the ministry of the Holy Spirit both operates on terms of power. The difference is that in the ministry of the Holy Spirit nobody controls the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit controls people, if you voluntarily

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surrender. But in occult, through black magic, you can learn how to control demons and use them. That is why the fascination with occult but if you go wrong, they will kill you, but you don't try that with God, the living God.

So, remember what Jesus says. In *Luke 4:5-7*.

Luke 4:5-7

⁵ Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."

Remember power is available on the other side. All you need to do is bend your knee before the devil. Remember Jesus' responds. Jesus said,

Luke 4:8

⁸ And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

Both the world and the Church want power. Everybody in the world wants power. Everybody wants power. Only difference is in the Church, God gives power to serve, while in the world people want power to control. So, Jesus showed us a different way. In *Philippians 2:5-11*,

Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God (what did God do?) also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

Jesus said, "I'm showing you a different way if you want power and authority." He says, "The way is you go down and down, the Father will lift you up higher and higher and higher." Therefore, in *Matthew 28:18*, after resurrection, Jesus will come and say.

Matthew 28:18

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

Why was it given to Him? Because He humbled Himself to the lowest level. Therefore, God raised Him up to the highest level. Remember this fundamentally because everybody in the world including people sitting here want power. Some of the reasons why you really study well is because you want power, you want control over your own destinies and not God. That's why God looks at the heart. He just doesn't look at your prayers. He goes beyond when you say, "Lord I want to be. . . (Why?) So that I can have more control."

His Son could have chosen any profession He wanted, He didn't. He said, "Father You choose it for Me, I give You control." Some of our prayers can be so wonderful to the ears but God sees beyond it because with everything there is power involved. There is power involved and Jesus said, "There is a different way." Because in the Kingdom, understand, never reject the means for the end. You know there is the way you achieve something and then what you achieve. In the Kingdom of God, the means matter more than the end. And sometimes we don't realize we get rejected by God because our methods were all wrong, though the end was good. God says, "It doesn't work that way in the Kingdom."

So, the question - 2017 will we submit to God's ways? How you do things, rather than what you achieve. That's why today, connecting with last Sunday's message, we will look at two verses from last Sunday's message and continue and build on this. Remember last Sunday we looked from Elijah on mount Carmel, the famine and what happened. First we look at *1 Kings 17:1*

1 Kings 17:1

¹⁷And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."

The first time we see Elijah, these were the first words uttered by Elijah. Second portion we will see something He says on mount Carmel. In *1 Kings 18:32-35*

1 Kings 18:32-35

³² Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. ³³ And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four water pots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." ³⁴ Then he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time; and he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. ³⁵ So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water.

So there are only two verses from last Sunday we will be looking at. Understand this, the first time when we see Elijah, nothing is known about Elijah at this point, nothing. If you look at *1 Kings 17:1* the only thing we know about Elijah is that he's from Tishbite, other than that we do not know. Yet this unknown man, unknown to man is known to God and stands before man and makes a declaration as if it is from God Himself. So, the question is when you are talking about power and authority, how does a man, or a woman, reach this point? We are talking about real power, Ahab has power, he is the king of Israel. And here is a man whom we did not even know at all, who hasn't been seen before this, stands before and declares the very Word of God as if he is God saying, "Until the Word of the Lord comes from my mouth, there will be no dew, no rain in Israel." How do you reach a place like this? Now, I'm going to make some assumptions, and like Paul said, I believe that I too have the Spirit of God, though it won't become Scripture. Because there are parallels in the Bible. Scripture says, "John the Baptist came in the power and in the spirit of Elijah." So, we don't know much about Elijah but we know much about John the Baptist. So, we take a look at the key words concerning John. We see that first in *Luke 1:80*,

Luke 1:80

⁸⁰ So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

First thing we understand about this kid is that he grew strong in the spirit but he dwelt in the desert until he was declared or shown to Israel. Second thing we hear about him is in *Luke 3:1-3*,

Luke 3:1-2

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,

Whole lot of big tetrarchs are given and then Scripture says,

² while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests,

(Now the big ones in the temple is also mentioned and then Scripture says,)

the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

The Word of God skirted all these big shots and went to that man in the wilderness. Are you getting the picture? So, what do we know about Elijah from this. I believe Elijah too like John when he appeared before king Ahab was around thirty years. When he was declared in public. He too must have lead a very secluded life in the wilderness and when the Word of the Lord came to him, he stepped forward and stood before Ahab. So, what is the first lesson we learn from Elijah? Before the Word of the Lord can ever come to us, truly come to us, before we can speak on God's behalf, our words must be sanctioned by the Holy Spirit and therefore, what we need to learn first is we all need to learn to listen. That's why this trip to the wilderness. Wilderness is a place away from the world, away from the noises and the distractions of this world. That is the place where we learn to listen. I'm not saying you should go to the desert. It can be your study, it can be a bathroom, it can be anywhere but you shut yourself up away from distraction. Because first thing honestly, the first thing 2017 if nothing else we learn, we learn to hear.

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Elijah learned to hear, John the Baptist learned to hear and when they heard and when the appointed time came, they stepped forward and two of them had two powerful messages to their generation because they heard. If we do not learn to hear, how will we obey? If we do not obey, how will we receive the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome. If we do not overcome, where does our hope really come from. So above all this year, we need to pray for hearing ears. If we do not hear, with the inner ear if we do not hear, we will either make very emotional decisions, either in anger, grief or sorrow or make very intellectual decisions but not truly spiritual decisions and every decision for a child of God is a spiritual decision, must be a spiritual decision and emotion and intellect should be behind. Note a few verses from the Bible to understand this truth. In *Isaiah 6:9-10* Scripture says, “

Isaiah 6:9

⁹ And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' ¹⁰ "Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed." ¹¹ Then I said, "Lord, how long?" and He answered: "until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate,

God is saying, “You know why destruction will come?” Destruction will come because people will have lost the capacity to hear from God. In *Lamentation 3:65*

Lamentation 3:65

⁶⁵ Give them a veiled heart; Your curse be upon them!

Veil their heart. In *2 Corinthians 3:13-18* God says,

2 Corinthians 3:13-18

¹³ unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. ¹⁵ But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. ¹⁶ Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

But look at *verse 16* and *17* a little closely. In *verse 16* Scripture says “Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” The only time our ears start hearing, the veil is taken away, is when somebody turns to the Lord. Whenever one turns to the Lord. Who is the Lord? The Lord is the Spirit. That is why God says, “Be careful that you hear His voice.” When you hear His voice and you turn and obey, the veil is taken off and where the Lord is the Spirit, when we turn to the Lord, we obey Him and when the Spirit is the Lord of our life, then we experience true spiritual liberty. Otherwise we don’t experience. That is when we are transformed from glory to glory. What does it mean in this physical life? In the midst of all the difficulties, we are moving from liberty to liberty. Like I keep telling, never forget the scene in the prison in Philippi. Two young men, beaten broken worshipping the Lord, why? Because incredible liberty because the Lord is the Spirit. That’s glory. The other glory is hidden inside which will be only revealed that day but there is an outside glory that can be known. It is the liberty which the Holy Spirit brings. And that’s what Scripture is talking about. Be careful that we hear. This veil is taken away, this veil is many-layered. It’s not one veil. It is many-layered. Now, let’s listen to Jesus about hearing. Listen to Jesus in *Matthew 13:34-35* about the parable.

Matthew 13:34-35

³⁴ All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them,

So, most of what we learned in the Scripture is what He spoke to His disciples but whenever He spoke to the crowd, He spoke to them in parables.

³⁵ that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."

Jesus spoke to them in parables. Now, listen to Jesus about parables in *Luke 8:8-11*

Luke 8:8-11

⁸ But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"⁹ Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?"¹⁰ And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, (Now, He'll quote from Isaiah) that 'Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'¹¹ "Now the parable is this:

He starts explaining. Do you see? What Jesus is actually saying? You know what the modern term is which you will understand better, young people will understand. He's saying you know what, the Word of God is encrypted. It's encrypted, unless the Holy Spirit opens you will not see and to see you need to turn to the Holy Spirit and He must become Lord, then only you can break that encryption, otherwise it's just a parable you will not see, you will not understand. We all know encryption very well. He says, "Be careful." All of today's security systems and hackers, that's all that is happening in the news, right? About hacking? The Word of God is secured by the Spirit of God. Neither the CIA, nor the GRU or RAW or MOSSAD. These are the four. RAW is ours, they are still raw. MOSSAD is one of the best, the Israelis. CIA is the Americans, GRU is the current Russians. He says, "None of them can break this (Word of God). It's encrypted by the Holy Spirit," but to the simplest of simple man when He turns to the Holy Spirit, it is opened up for him. There is no other way. There is no other way. It's encrypted. Listen to Jesus, His own words in *John 6:63*,

John 6:63

⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

He says, "This is Spirit, it is life but remember, it doesn't work that way for everybody." Everybody who reads the Word of God, it is of worth, nothing. Why? Because it is the Spirit who gives life. The Spirit has to open it. If the Spirit doesn't open it, your flesh will profit nothing from the Word of God. You will get tired, you will get bored, you get mad, you will get angry, you will get sleepy. All kinds of things happen. All kind of things happen, why? The flesh will profit nothing because it's encrypted. That's why the same people who fall asleep over the Bible can read a novel without falling asleep. So, it's not a problem with language. It's not a problem with tiredness, it's got to do with encryption. Flesh profits nothing. Only the Holy Spirit can bring life. Listen to actually what the Word of God says in *Proverbs 4:20-22*,

Proverbs 4:20-22

²⁰ My son, (Now the Father is speaking, the Spirit of God is speaking to His children)

give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. ²¹ Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart;²² (and what does verse 22 say) **For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh.**

We sing this song but let's look at it deeper. *They are life to those who find them and health to all their flesh.* The flesh profits nothing. God says, "No, it does. It's health to your whole flesh if My Spirit opens it. To your whole body it is health. It heals, it brings wholeness." You see, the Word of God is life. It is life which can quicken your mortal bodies. Scripture says, "*Body for the Lord, the Lord for the body.*" The Lord for the body, life to those who find them. This is no esoteric knowledge given to mystics. Please don't think, "Then, Oh, I have to be a mystic." No, this is not Sufism. This, even the simplest man can understand. All he needs is to repent and turn to the Holy Spirit and keep on turning. Remember the Apostles on the day of Pentecost? Remember subsequently the shock of the Sanhedrin, the most learned group of men who knew the Bible by-heart but veiled, by-heart but veiled and they are listening to Peter and John. *Acts 4:13* says

Acts 4:13

¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

They listened to these men and say, "How can these uneducated, untrained people explain the Torah like this? How is it possible? We don't understand it that way, how do these guys get it?" Because encryption was open for them and not for the Sanhedrin. They were literally shocked. Remember the parable of all parables? According to Jesus the parable of all parables is the parable of the sower. It is there in different gospel. At least three if I am right, it is there. All three; Matthew,

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Mark and Luke has it. John doesn't have it. It is there in different gospels but connected with today's message let's only look at two of them and two verses. *Luke 8:18*

Luke 8:18

¹⁸ Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.

Take heed or be careful about how you hear. Now, turn to *Mark 4:24* the same parable.

Mark 4:24

²⁴ Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure, you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given.

They are not the same. That's why we have to read the Scripture carefully. What did He say? *Be careful of what you hear and be careful how you hear.* First, He said, *"Be careful how you hear."* Second, He said, *"Be careful what you hear."* It's all about hearing. Be careful what you hear, be careful how you hear. It's a listening exercise. It's also got to do with seeing. Everything are exercised. You know when I was a class room teacher twenty-five, thirty years ago, I used to ask my student, "Come here, go to the window. Look, come back, sit down." Next one, "Go to the window, look, come back, sit down." "Go to the window, look, come back, sit down." Now, what did you see? "I saw a tree." I said, "Ok, what did you see?" "I saw the clouds." Ok, what did you see? "I saw the mountains." I said, "Why did you see differently through the same window?" It's called foregrounding and backgrounding. In the same way what you hear is not the same because it depends upon how you hear. What you read is not the same; it depends upon how you read. Be very careful about these things because the Holy Spirit says, "Be careful," all those who have ears let them hear what the Holy Spirit says. So, the disciples in *Matthew 13:10* will ask this question,

Matthew 13:10

¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

"Why do You speak to them in parables?" Jesus gives a very lengthy answer. He's basically quoting Isaiah.

Matthew 13:11

¹¹ He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

God says, "Encryption is for them to whom the kingdom is not given but to those who have turn to the kingdom, encryption is taken out." The little, little ways in which we understand where we are when we read the Bible.

Matthew 13:12-14

¹² For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. ¹³ Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive;

Then listen to what He says,

Matthew 13:15

¹⁵ For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.'

Do our eyes see? Do our ears hear? You see, the problem is sometimes we completely misinterpret Scripture because we read it out of context. Listen to Jesus in the same parable of sower, in *Luke 8:9*

Luke 8:9

⁹ *Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?"*

What does this parable mean? How does Jesus sum it up in verse 16-18?

Luke 8:16-18

¹⁶ *"No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. ¹⁸ Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."*

Especially verse 17. People get frightened about verse 17, "Oh! Everything hidden will be revealed." That is not what it means. What it means is that, those who have learned to hear from God and obey, even the secret things of God, the mysteries of God will be revealed to them. That they will have more and more and more understanding about who God is. He says, "Everything." There is nothing that is secret now in the Kingdom of God which will not be revealed to God's children who search. It will be revealed because it is for them. The mysteries are for them but the only thing is that first you have to learn how to hear and obey and turn and as the lordship of the Holy Spirit increases so will be the understanding of the Kingdom. It's Jesus or the Holy Spirit, the one who lights the lamp and the purpose of the light is not to conceal but to reveal.

So, consider what Jesus says, when He says, "Everything that is hidden or concealed in Scripture will be revealed or disclosed or known or brought to the open." The problem is you meet, nine out of ten people who regularly read their Bible, they are not interested. They read it regularly with discipline but it's just a discipline, just a discipline nothing is being revealed or unlocked because there is a problem with hearing. That is why the question God asked, "How do you hear?" Look at the context in which the question is asked. In *Luke 8:4*

Luke 8:4

⁴*And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable:*

Large crowd. As soon as He sees the crowd He'll speak parables. Change the language. Then in verse 8 He concludes.

Luke 8:8

⁸ *But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*

What happened? The crowd heard that much and they went away. In verse 9, His disciples heard, they understood and they said, "What does it mean?"

Luke 8:9

⁹ *Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?"*

Let me ask you. How many Sundays have you really gone back from church pondering in your heart, "God, what did that mean? Pastor said something, what did that mean?" If you have pondered and asked, you get a reply from the Lord, He will teach you. Why is it that we have no questions? Why is it that we have no questions? It is because we are not hearing. The crowds all heard and He said, "All those who have ears let them hear." They also heard and they went. The disciples said, "What does it mean? You taught something. They didn't understand, we also didn't understand but we want to know what it is." Do you really mean to say all the messages of the past eight years, you understood everything? Did we ask God? Did we ask? That's the problem, everywhere around the world in every church, crowds hear and they go but a few disciples go home pondering in their hearts, "What does this mean?" To them God says, "The revelation is given." The rest are the three types of soil. They brought forth no fruit, nothing. Remember the two disciples on the road to Emmaus?

Luke 24:13-14

¹³ *Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they talked together of all these things which had happened.*

And they were pondering in their hearts and talking to each other about Jesus coming, preached and crucified, dead and now they are saying, "The tomb is empty." They are talking to each other and pondering over these questions. What happens?

Luke 24:15

¹⁵ So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.

Do we, when we get together really ponder over these questions of Scriptures? You can be very sure Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, draws near and listens to our conversation and starts giving illumination because we are interested in this question. What did you hear? Instead what do we do? We turn and talk about clothes after service. What to wear, tomorrow is a wedding. God says, "Bye-bye." Are our minds consumed by the King and the Kingdom? Is that our conversation? In *Malachi 3:16* Scripture says,

Malachi 3:16

¹⁶ Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them;

Whenever those who fear the Lord is sitting and talking about God and His Kingdom, who is listening? God is listening and Scripture says,

Malachi 3:16

¹⁶...So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name.

See, we blame everybody else except ourselves for our lack of spiritual growth. We have intellectual growth, I'm talking about spiritual growth where our ears really discern and hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. The Kingdom in us grows only when Kingdom conditions are met and the first condition is this. Listen, hear. *All those who have ears, let them hear.* Elijah's hidden life represents one facet of his life; he had learned to listen. He had also learned to obey. Therefore, when the time came God said, "Get up Elijah," "Yes my Lord" "Go stand before the king and you shall speak these words." It didn't scare him. What is he going to say, "As the God of Israel liveth before whom I stand, until the Word of the Lord comes from my mouth, there shall be no dew or rain in this land" and he walks away. His first address to the nation is judgment and he's not afraid to speak it because he's got a life of listening to God and obeying God and hearing from God. That is why this wilderness, away from these noises, away like yesterday Saturday, away from the noises and gadgets. You are snoring and still going on, gadgets, noises. When will we hear? Remember Israel's history.

Deuteronomy 8:1-4

¹Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers. ² And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³ So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. ⁴ Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.

He says, "You know what, what was I teaching you in the wilderness? I was teaching you in the wilderness to listen; to listen to My voice. I took you out of Egypt, didn't take you to the Promised Land straight away. I took you into the wilderness a secluded place because I had to teach you first how to listen." In English, we call it LSRW. First listening skill, then speaking, then reading, then writing. He said, "Reading and writing I can skip with you but listen. If you learn how to listen, you will learn how to speak My Words. So, the first thing I was trying to teach is how you learn to listen to the voice of God, so I took you into the wilderness."

These are the five fundamental truths about Israel. He led them away from Egypt into the wilderness; that is from all distractions, so that they could hear clearly. I keep telling you this illustration over and over again but it's such a powerful illustration about a man whose friend was visiting who came from the mountains, high mountain place to New York city and

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these two men; one is an American Indian, if I'm right and the other guy is walking down a busy street of US, when suddenly the man who came from the mountain stopped and he said, "I hear a cricket, a grasshopper," and he said, "Grasshopper in New York city?" He said, "Yes, I heard it." "Do you see these crowd, do you see all these vehicles, where is this cricket?" He said, "I hear," and he stopped, he looked. At the shop window, there were some potted plant, he went close by and looked under a leaf and he said, "Here it is." And he said, "Wow, how did you hear?" He said, "Everybody hears. The only thing is your ears have been tuned to another thing, another sound." He said, "I will show you all these people crowding and walking on the pavement also will hear." He took a handful of coins and he dropped it on the pavement, everybody stopped and turned because he says, "Your minds have been tuned to the sound of money and you hear it. I have lived up in the mountains, I know how to distinguish the voice of a cricket in a crowd."

We all hear but we hear different things. Therefore, God took His people out of Egypt from all those noises and brought them into the wilderness and fed them Manna so that they would learn to hear the voice of God. First principle. He was teaching them. He fed them with Manna. What did He feed them with? First, He took them into a secluded place. Second, He fed them with Manna and we know the Manna represented the Word of God. Three, He gave them His Spirit, in *1 Corinthians 10:4*

1 Corinthians 10:4

⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

The rock was Christ, but when Christ, the Rock, was smitten, out flowed the river. Jesus says, "*The Spirit has not been released because I have not been glorified yet.*" Fifty days after He's risen and the glorification has taken place with the Blood over there, the river will start flowing on Pentecost, the same type happened in the desert. When Jesus was smitten, the river started flowing. So they too partook of the Holy Spirit. They were taken into the wilderness, secluded place, fed with the Word of God, they drank of the Holy Spirit and there is something else that happened.

Deuteronomy 29:5

⁵ And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet.

He says, "Look at your clothes. Has it worn-out in these forty years.?" He says, "No. The righteousness that I imputed on you of Christ, has not worn-out in these forty years in the wilderness. I still declared you righteous in My sight, but you have not grown in your righteousness." "*Look at your feet, your sandals have not worn-out on your feet,*" what does it mean? You have external peace, no enemy or war has subdued you in these forty years. You have righteousness, you have peace but the end story of them all. What is the end story? In *1 Corinthians 10:5* their end story is this.

1 Corinthians 10:5

⁵ But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

They were in the wilderness, secluded place. They had the Word of God, they had the Spirit of God, they had a righteousness imputed, they had external peace but God was not pleased with any one of them because none of them, except three, had learned, trained their ears to hear the voice of God and obey. The same fallacy happens to the church, the same thing. We come into the church which is a secluded place, we are fed the Word of God, we are taught about the Holy Spirit, we are taught about the righteousness we have in Christ Jesus and that our feet are shod with the Gospel of peace, yet is God pleased with us? Do we hear His voice? Have we trained our ears to hear His voice? And everything that was promised to Israel, it was on one condition,

Deuteronomy 28:1

¹ Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord. . .

If you diligently obey the voice of the Lord. Have you heard the voice of the Lord? Did we hear the voice of the Lord? Have you learned to listen, learned to hear, learned to obey? Therefore, the first thing to do this month, which I keep telling you; zip your lip. Talk less, listen more. It's a very, very good advice because we don't realize in so many ways all of us are babies.

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Just think about this. If Vijay is sitting with two of his friends whom I do not know from IIT and they are talking about robotics. If I try to join the discussion, wont I be an idiot? They will look at me and laugh in their minds. I'd be talking like a baby, right? That's one of the reasons why we should keep our mouth shut because if you keep your mouth shut, *even a fool will be considered wise*. If I sit there in the discussion and keep on nodding like that, they will think, "Okay, Pastor knows robotics."

The problem is people don't understand, they don't have much information on so many subjects and they talk like experts. Ignorance. That's why the first thing we need to do is learn to listen. Now, ask Pastor Vijay also. If Pastor Vijay and I are caught in a room where Zac Poonen and John Piper are talking, do you think we'll open our mouths? We will not, we will listen. We'll listen carefully and hang on to every word, if possible we'll record it. We won't talk. And you will say, "O' Pastor you know so much," yes, but in comparison? No. Not with them. With them I better listen because you will learn a lot if you listen to them. You don't try to engage into a conversation with them and show off your knowledge, they will look down at you and laugh. This is our problem, we haven't learned to listen. The problem is when it comes the Kingdom of God and the truths of the Kingdom of God, extremely intellectuals are babies and they are content with that because they are comparing their knowledge in the world with this, where that means nothing in the Kingdom.

That's why we have to be careful because this is about the Kingdom and this is about eternity. Rest is all temporary. Remember our old uncle Job in the Bible? He was talking and talking and talking and finally God opens His mouth. As soon as God opened His mouth, do you know his response? In *Job 40:4*

Job 40:4

⁴ "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth.

First thing he said, "I should have zipped my mouth. I talk too much." Church, learn to listen; what to listen, how to listen. What to hear and how to hear. Two things, so that we may learn to speak. Elijah's words were very few. You read the whole narrative, it's very few. What did he say? *"As the Lord God of Israel liveth by whom I stand, there shall be no dew, or rain these years."* We are good listeners of news, movies, music, entertainment and gossip and everything else but in the process we become dull of hearing of the Word of God and the voice of the Spirit. That's our problem. Anthakshari (a spoken parlor game played in India connected with movie songs) Boy! You have to see how Christians can connect. They cannot connect two verses (from the Bible) together. There are Christians who believe Epistle is the wife of the Apostle. You have to hear the biblical knowledge of Christians, you wouldn't know whether you want to cry or laugh.

So, understand, you have to learn to listen. Learn to listen; how to hear, what to hear. The disciples heard, that's why they asked Him immediately, "What does this mean?" The years when I was a teacher I use to tell my student, "I'm there for morning study duty at five, I'm there at evening study duty at seven. Why didn't you ask me, if you didn't understand?" Now, suddenly exam question is there, sudden test is there. "Sir I don't understand." Why didn't you understand? Because you did not hear. You did not hear. If you had heard while I was teaching and again when I was teaching and again when I was teaching, one of those times in the morning or the evening when I was there with you, you would have asked me the question; "Sir what does this line mean?" You didn't ask because you did not hear. Is it true? You did not ask. 'For these feathers that was plucked from Caesar's wing will make you fly an ordinary pitch or else will make us servile slaves,' that's from Julius Caesar. "I didn't understand." Why didn't you understand? Because you did not hear. You were busy occupied. You were looking straight in my eyes but your mind was elsewhere. You did not hear.

If you had heard, you would have asked, "Lord, what does this mean?" You don't even have to ask me. Something you don't understand that is what John says. "The anointing will teach you all things, because the anointing, the Holy Spirit is looking; who is interested in the King and the Kingdom. Who wants to hear so that he may obey? And we are not interested. God says, "Fine, I love you but I'm not interested either." Without the Holy Spirit, we can do nothing. I remember after Elijah, mount Carmel instead of confronting Jezebel, he runs and gives up. God restores him and he's in the cave in mount Horeb. God gives him and us all a very clear object lesson. Listen to this lesson. In *1 Kings 19:11-13*,

1 Kings 19:11-13

¹¹ Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and

after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. ¹³ So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

There was a wind, mighty wind that shattered the mountain. There an earthquake, there a fire, all manifestation of the Holy Spirit, but he's used to another voice which is a still small voice. When he heard that voice; that familiar voice he had heard for thirty years, he wrapped his face and he came out to listen. Have you heard that voice? And he heard the voice saying, "What are you doing here Elijah?" Does God speak? Enormous, mighty, display of power of the Holy Spirit. Don't confuse power with presence. The wind tore the mountain apart. There are times when we need the Holy Spirit to display His power like that. Israel needed it many times in their history. It was the wind that tore the red sea apart and made a way for them. It was the wind that brought the locust in and took the locust out. It was all the Holy Spirit, as wind. But remember the same Holy Spirit can sound like thunder on Mount Sinai and as a whisper on Mount Horeb. It's the same Holy Spirit. When the law was given to Moses on Mount Sinai, it was thunder. But when He spoke to His servant on Mount Horeb, it was a whisper. We need to be able to distinguish both and hear the voice of God in both. Learn to hear. He can be that mighty wind that shatters mountains on Horeb yet in the valley of bones to the prophet Ezekiel what does He say *in Ezekiel 37:9*,

Ezekiel 37:9

⁹ Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live."

The Holy Spirit on Mount Horeb is this mighty wind which shatters rocks and mountains but in the valley of bones, the same Holy Spirit comes like a gentle breathe breathing upon individual bones so that they can come back to life. We need to be able to be sensitive to both. That's why God says, "Learn to hear." Sometimes we need oil but never confuse the baptism of the Holy Spirit with anointing. They are similar but not the same. All hundred and twenty were baptized in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost but some among them were anointed as Apostles, as prophets, as evangelist, as pastors, as teachers. It is not the same.

We need Him as oil. We need His anointing. We all can be filled with the Holy Spirit but for what each one of you have been called you need an anointing and you need a fresh anointing when there is a change of direction. I was filled with the Holy Spirit years and years back, first experience but I needed an anointing to be a shepherd. Without it I can never be a shepherd. Even for students there is an anointing to study. That's why God says, "Without the Holy Spirit you will only struggle." Some of you do excellently but it's on your own skill. One day when you die they will bury your certificates with you because that's all it was good for because there's no glory for God in any of those things. We need anointing for every task God calls us to. Sometimes we need that oil, that unction many times in our lives.

1 Samuel 16:13

³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

David is a teenager. He's anointed and chosen from his brothers in his father's house. Years later when he's thirty years old.

2 Samuel 2:4

⁴ Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, "The men of Jabesh Gilead were the ones who buried Saul.

Now, he's anointed a second time. Now, he's anointed the king of Judah. Another seven years later when he's thirty-seven years old,

2 Samuel 5:3

³ Therefore all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord. And they anointed David king over Israel.

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He's anointed a third time. Each time the task is changing. One, he's anointed from among his brothers. Two, be the shepherd of Israel. Now, he's anointed to be king over Judah. Now, he's anointed to be king over all of Israel. As your usefulness grows in the Kingdom you need an increasing of the Holy Spirit which is also anointing. That's why God says, "Without me you can do nothing." To understand, to hear and know the Spirit of God. Without Him God does nothing, He never does. Because the days that are coming, the years that are coming is going to be incredibly difficult without the anointing; nobody is going to survive in their faith. Therefore, learn to hear because sometimes what we need is the water of cleansing. Sometimes what we need from the Holy Spirit is that fire to burn up. The fire to revive us.

We have to learn to hear. "Lord, give me the Holy Spirit." God says, "I already gave you the Holy Spirit." 'Ah, You did?' "Yes I did." What do I need? He says, "Hear, He will tell you what you need." 'Lord today I need oil, I need anointing to do my work.' Two weeks from now, "Lord, what's wrong with me?" The Holy Spirit will say, "Your fire has gone down, you need fire." 'Lord anoint me once again with Your fire.' You are fine. Three weeks later you realized there's something wrong. "I have the fire, I have the anointing but there's something. Lord, what do I need?" God says, "You need cleansing." "Why Lord?" "Because you heard that, you said this, you need cleansing." "Lord, cleanse me afresh." Is it the same? It's not the same. That's why we need to hear. That's why God says in *Luke 8:18*,

Luke 8:18

¹⁸ Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given;

Why? Because he's hearing very clearly. To him God is giving more and we say, "That is not fair," but God says, "That's because you are a communist." It's all ideologies. There are two main ideologies that drive America - Democrats, communist; Republicans, capitalist. What is the ideology? The democrats believe - take from the man who works and give it to the fellow who doesn't work. What do the republicans believe? They believe - never as a poor man employed me, every time somebody employed me, it is a rich man. So, let the rich thrive, I will get a job. Both, two different ideologies. You ask any young person in America under the age of twenty, who do you want to vote for? Sanders! I said you know what, you are a lazy fellow, that's why. Why? What does Sander says? "Take from the rich and give it to the poor." How did the rich man become rich? By working hard. In America, not in India. That's why it is called the land of dreams, opportunities. Anybody could become rich because you have the opportunities.

Now, a whole generation has risen who says, "We do not want to work. Just take the money from him and give it to me." Ideologies. Everything we have to learn to hear first carefully. Where do these philosophies come from? Where does your opinions come from. Where does your ideologies come from? My God says, "Whoever has, to him give more..." because he knows how to invest. He knows how to work it out. So why give it to a fellow who will waste it. The fellow who hid it, Jesus says, "Take that talent from him and give it to the fellow who had more." That's how the Kingdom works. That's why we have to learn even in terms of anointing and mysteries of the Kingdom, the knowledge of the King, the one who knows more. He will know even better. That's why we have to learn to hear. Never forget all this is connected with the parable of the sower. Right? To him who has more, more will be given.

Luke 8:15

¹⁵ But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

We are not getting into that. We shall leave that alone. And what do you bring forth? You bring forth a hundredfold. Scripture says in Gospel according to Luke, a hundredfold. But what is multiplied actually? You plant a seed and you get hundredfold of what? Of the same seed. So what is multiplied in you is not you, what is multiplied in you is the Christ in you. The mind of Christ is growing in you or not growing in you, the wisdom of Christ is growing in you or not growing in you. The Revelation of Christ is growing in you or not growing in you. The anointing of Christ is growing in you or not growing in you. The fullness of Christ is happening or not happening and if it is not happening, the other is happening; the flesh is growing and growing and taking dominion.

Isaiah 55:10-11

¹⁰ "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth

from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

We quote all these very randomly, very familiar. But what is God actually saying? God is saying, when His Word goes forth here, the rain comes down; the Holy Spirit comes down on it. It will not return. It will work on it until it brings forth fruit. *"It shall not return to Me void but it shall accomplish what I please."* Does it work in everybody? No, it works only in the lives of those who want to accomplish what God pleases in them. That's why Scripture says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Everyone who wants to please God, the Word of God they hear, the rain of the Holy Spirit will fall upon, it will achieve its purpose. It will never come back void. On the others, it doesn't even settle. He just skips them and misses them.

If you and I learn to hear and obey and our desire is to please God, then God says, "The Word which God sends forth will always accomplish its purpose in our lives. It will." That is how God prepared a man like that in the wilderness. Elijah the Tishbite. Elijah will finally stand alone before all the prophets of Baal and the nation of Israel all alone. All alone and not scared, why? Because he had learned to stand with God alone; stand before God alone. Most of us need company before we can do anything for God. Elijah had no company because we do not have the courage to stand alone. We're always looking for company because we have not learned actually to stand alone before God. Therefore, we have no hard and fast convictions. Most of our issues about life, our convictions are like water; it can go anywhere. We have no hard and fast convictions. Why? Because we have not learned to stand alone before God.

It's only one man who stands before this entire nation and says, "Don't stand between two opinions. Stand like me, one opinion." Absolutely one. So remember, the second verse I gave you from last Sunday's message. What did He say? *"Come near me."* Now, they have to hear what God is saying through a man and obey. "Come and hear me." How many of you realized, that was the same call that was given to you before the message began, every Sunday - "Come near," and some of you just ignore it without realizing it is the same thing God has always told people, "Come near." "No, I will sit at the back." But the anointing flows from the front. "I'm not interested in the anointing." We didn't say that but without even knowing it, we made that statement.

Yet all of us when we got saved and we started, we went for the front. I remembered sitting in the front in AG, looking up at Pastor Stubbs' face because you come for the second service. Then the first service people go for the second service worship, then they leave and as they are leaving I am running to the front. Why? Because I knew I had to sit there. It didn't matter how old I was and whether I had children, I still ran with them. "Come near me." For long they were all spectators, now they have to make a choice. First choice is - are you going to hear and obey? or you're still going to stand there? *And they drew near him* and they saw a strange sight. The old man, I don't know how old he was. He repairs the altar, everything. Then after that, I don't know where he brought his shovel from, this man is digging a trench. Never through the entire Bible will you see anybody digging a trench around the altar. Only Elijah. They are watching him. What is he doing?

1 Kings 18:32-35

³² Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. ³³ And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said,

And again they have to hear. How do you hear, what do you hear? He says
"Fill four waterpots with water,

(KJV will say Barrels, not waterpots ok, big barrels. Bring four barrels of water.)

and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." ³⁴ Then he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time; and he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. ³⁵ So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water.

Suddenly everything changed. Everybody has a choice to be a hearer of the word or a doer. Nobody is an onlooker, everybody has to be a participant. Some people must have hidden their water bottle. Everybody, what did he say? "Fill four barrels with water and bring." The point is, you have two choices; you can either watch or you can be involved. That's what God has been always telling even in the Kingdom. You can either watch or be involved. What is he asking for? People at the

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back must be asking one another, "What did he ask?" and the ripple is going; "water," "water," "water." Can you imagine the murmurs? "Why does he need water?" "Is he thirsty?" "Why does he need four barrels?" "Is he playing a trick on us?"

In every group, you need to realize that there is this twenty percent who do the work of eighty percent. So, when the first call of water came, twenty percent must have taken, barrel is going, four barrels are going around and everybody is taking their little and filling. Finally, it is full and it comes back. Four barrels come back. Pour it. When the four barrels come to the front, everybody would have said, "Yeah, we got it." The fellows who did not pour at all are the ones who will clap loudest. Remember. It happens in every church. The ones who did nothing are the ones who say "hallelujah!" the loudest and they must have said, "Oh! Let's see what will happen." Instead, what did he say? "Bring again." Now there must have been silence. Suddenly barrels are going around again and people are pouring little by little by little. Barrels came back. He said, "Empty them on the altar." They said, "Okay. Now, we can see what will happen." He said, "No, bring again." Their hearts must be sinking because what is he asking after three and a half years of drought. What is he asking? They had to probably take out their last drop.

So many churches never experience neither the fire nor the rain of God is because they are all spectators and never participants. Spectators never participate in anything. Only participants do. When they did it the third time, all their water supply must have been over. Now, it is no longer between them and Elijah, it is not between them and God. Have you ever come to that point? Have you ever given to God where you no longer retain control? We could do what they did in our own terms. Take a bag, or I could send you this bag and ask you, "Put your house key in, put your car key in. Put your wallet in." Are you willing to hand over lordship to Jesus Christ? You want fire? You want rain? "Yes I will give, but I will retain control." God says, "It never happens in the kingdom, I always take control." Therefore, it brings us back to the second point, not what you hear but how you hear. In *Matthew 6:24* Jesus says,

Matthew 6:24

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

You cannot. He said, "You cannot it's not possible." You will see the pattern was there right from the beginning. We don't see it because we don't study it. When God created everything, everything was His and still is though we pretend as if it's ours but it's still His. He put Adam in charge, He put Adam only in charge. He was the steward and when Adam disobeyed the voice of God, he lost his stewardship. Then God called Abraham, promised him a land but the land belongs to God. It's not Abraham's. In *Acts 7:5* Scripture says,

Acts 7:5

⁵ And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him.

Though he lived there hundred years. He said, "That's your land for your generations but never forget, the land is Mine." In *Hebrews 11:9* Scripture says,

Hebrews 11:9

⁹ By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;

Are they stewards? Yes. Then comes Israel. God chooses Israel and gives them the Promised Land but when He gave them the Promised Land and He made this great promises, "Each one of you will have a promised piece of land. You will have houses you did not build, wells you did not dig, flocks and herds and gold and silver," along with it He said something which we never see unless God opens our eyes. He told them something. *Leviticus 25:23* God will say,

Leviticus 25:23

²³ 'The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me.

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“The land is Mine.” You are just stewards. The land belongs to God. It cannot be sold. It cannot be divided. And before he left office, Obama by not withholding the UN proclamation has paved the way for the land to be divided. So watch out for 2017. It’s going to be a dangerous year, because God said, “The land is Mine. It cannot be divided.” It’s His. Nobody can divide that land. It belongs to somebody else. No nation, no UN resolution can touch this because it belongs to God who created that land. We are living in dangerous times. Understand prophetically.

So let me ask you this question. If God said the same thing to Adam, Abraham and Israel, in the New Covenant He gave us a body and He gave us a life. Whom does it belong to? Are you a steward or are you a master? Do you decide everything about your life? Or do you let God decide the movements of your life because you realized, “I am just a sojourner, just a pilgrim in this body. It belongs to Him. It’s not mine”? That’s why we are coming into tougher stuff and we fall asleep because we didn’t even graduate from primary class. So, that is the issue on Mount Carmel. Unless the lordship is established, stewardship will never happen. The people hear, the people obey and the lordship of God is established. Then what happens? The fire comes down. People never truly understands the heart of God. In *Ephesians 3:17-19* Scripture says,

Ephesians 3:17-19

¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

We don’t understand, we only look at, “If I give lordship to Jesus Christ, boy! I will lose.” The only thing you will lose is control, nothing else. But we don’t want to lose control. What does the next verse say?

Ephesians 3:20

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

What am I getting at? What did He ask Israel at the time of three and a half years of drought? He says, “Bring four barrels of water, pour. Bring again four barrels of water, pour. Bring again...” until they had no water left. Can you lose with God? How much did the people sacrifice? Twelve barrels of water. How much did they get in return? Tons and tons of gallons of water pouring down in a flood from God because *He’s able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think*. We don’t understand what the lordship of Jesus Christ actually means in our lives but because we do not want lordship, we are satisfied with that trickle. “Fine Lord, I got a trickle that’s okay. I still am in control.”

How much did the little boy gave? Five loaves and two fishes. Let’s average estimate there was ten thousand in that crowd. *Five thousand men, women and children besides*. If that boy gave only five loaves and two fishes, by the same statistics, He multiplied it into fifty thousand loaves and at least twenty thousand fishes. Can anyone out give God? How much did the poor widow give Elijah? A little flour, a little oil probably enough to make two cakes. Yet what does Scripture say, “Days went by, weeks went by, probably years. Her flour never ran out, her oil never run out.”

Time of incredible testing is coming, I’m telling you. It came to all of them in the Bible. It’s called famine. In every one of these people God intervened and kept them but beyond keeping, to the ones who heard and obeyed, like Isaac and Joseph, there was an abundance given. That’s why Jesus says over and over again. Let me repeat again in *Luke 8:18* what does it say?

Luke 8:18

¹⁸Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."

Famine shouldn’t scare us. There is a tightening that is going on all around the globe, especially in India. There’s a real tightening going on. Every report from every church I heard in the past two week is this. Our offerings have dipped. The biggest churches are panicking because they have huge programs, planned running into crores and there is no money coming in because people are panicking, churches are panicking. Forget the world, let’s leave the world aside. We are not bothered about the world. Unlike us, many churches have their database of givers and they are all calling them up, “You

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haven't given, you haven't given last week." Why is there panic? Because we have to take heed how you hear. Whether you are an individual or whether you are a church. We need to hear. If you are an individual, what will happen when famine comes, you will panic. And like the poor widow, you will say, "No, there is only enough for me and my son. We will eat and we will die." Elijah said, "I do not come here to kill you, I came to give life." He said, "No, don't do that. It may look weird, it may look unorthodox but do one thing, first make it and give it to me and I will tell again you what the Word of the Lord is. I heard it very clearly when I was in Cherith. The Lord told me, 'Go to Zarephath where I have commanded a poor widow to feed you.' I know what I heard. You give and I promise you one thing, until the famine stops, your cruise will never go dry."

Learn to hear, otherwise in our panic we will block our own blessings; our own. This is not a time when churches should cut down their planning and their programs. Whatever was started by God should continue because we believe. It was God who started, not man. If it's man who started let it stop. It's a good time to stop. Say, "Famine has come I'm stopping." But if it is God who started, don't panic, listen.

It's interesting, as soon as Jesus finishes teaching about this parable about the sower, about hearing and listening and all. As soon as He finishes, there was a knock on the door. Who is at the door?

Luke 8:19-21

¹⁹ **Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd.**

(Who came? Mother and brothers)

²⁰ **And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You."**

(And He concludes the parable with this statement. What does He say?)

²¹ **But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."**

He says, "You know what My closest family members in the Kingdom are those who have learned to hear and obey." What a finale to that parable of parables! Where did He begin, where does He end? When the crowds were coming, He started teaching in parables. Then He finishes the parable saying, "All those who have ears let them ear." The crowds left as if they heard. They all went, "Yeah, I heard." Nobody heard. As soon as the crowds left, the disciples asked, "What does this mean?" He explained to them what it meant. And then comes the family and said, "Your mother and brothers are waiting?" He said, "Wait a minute, let Me now finish the parable. This is it. Those who had learned to hear My voice and obey My voice, they are My closest members of My family. My mother, My brothers." We have extended family also, right? Uncles, nephews, they are all there but the closest are these who hear the Word of God and do it.

That's why this year, learn to hear. Learn to obey. Learn to hear, learn to obey and don't take it lightly, don't go by the news on the TV. I'm telling you church. You can believe me, it's not going to get better. It's going to get worse, get worse for only those who don't hear. In the entire famine in Samaria and in Israel. Elijah never went hungry a single day. Never a single day did he have to worry about food, search for food or ever have to go hungry without food and yet he did nothing other than listen and obey. The only man in that entire nation, even the king was going around telling his commander, "I will go this way, you go that way. At least we'll be able to save some animals. Let us look for fodder for them." Even the king was searching for fodder, Elijah didn't. One man. It's a principle set in the Kingdom telling us that terrible times will come. Learn to hear, learn to obey.

All of Egypt is under the plague, people are dying, animals are dying, crops are failing but in one appointed place because they chose to stay in that appointed place called Goshen, Israel was untouched. Even Egypt was under tremendous darkness for three days, where they could feel the darkness whereby Egyptians could not get up and move, in Israel's dwelling there was light. Why? Because they chose to obey. There is a time coming much closer than everyone thinks where, if you haven't learn now to hear and obey, when that day comes you will buckle under pressure and give in. That's the danger buckle under pressure and give in and God says, "Don't give in to pressure now, when it hasn't really started." Don't give in to pressure. Learn now, get away from these noises, get away, starting today. Don't go sit in all these naturals and unnaturals with your mouth open saying, "Tomorrow is marriage." No, go sit, go back listen to the word all over again. Don't waste time over these things and money.

The strangest and the saddest part of the whole thing is that when the whole nation is in crisis of money, people have money for these. People have money for this. Don't you feel guilty? When you know hundreds and thousands and millions

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of people have left the cities and gone back to the villages because there are no jobs. They have been laid off work and people have money for this kind of junk. Think about it. Those who are getting married it is fine, but those who are not getting married? There should be a tinge of guilt in our heart. That's why we have it. That's why the first thing God has to teach Elijah, Elijah is sitting there carefree. In Nepali we say 'Majale' ok meaning nicely sitting and eating. Raven brings breakfast, drinking from the brook. He is happy, "Hallelujah! What a nice life! I didn't realize being a prophet was so good." God said, "You're cool." One day he looks and there is no water. "What do you think Elijah? Because you obeyed and you are faithful, when I pronounce judgment over My people, you will be exempt from their pain? You have to feel their pain. There is no water for you. Feel their pain."

Otherwise we will happily prophecy, drinking and eating. God says, "No, you need to feel their pain, then only you will learn to cry out for them. I'm not sending you to a rich man's house or a rich woman's house. I'm going to send you to a poor, poor widow's hut in Samaria. So that you will learn to subsist for the next few years on little bread and water. That's your diet for the next two years Elijah. What is that? Bread and little water which she can give you. Live, feel the pain. Feel the pain of the people then only you will learn how to cry out for the people. Otherwise you will not understand the pain of the people."

That's why when everything is over and he goes up to the mountain, he does not lift his head from between his knees until he knows the answer to the prayer is come. Then he gets up. Sometimes we as Christians forget we are not exempt from the pain. We are part of the pain, if you are not part of the pain, we'll become part of the problem. God says, "You are not part of the problem, you are meant to be part of the solution." But we are so blinded by the flesh therefore we are not able to hear the voice of the Spirit. Be wise, good stewards, good stewards of your money. Don't waste. Put away. If God says, "Give away," give away without fear, otherwise put away. Be wise. This is not the season to shop, this is the season to pray. This is the season, like the prophets of the old say, a season to tighten your belts.

Paul says, "I know how to abase and how to abound." It's a season to abase, not to abound. Let God bring abundance, don't do it yourself. Young or old. Some of you might think, "What difference does it make, I'm so young, I don't have any money." Really? Even these kids have pocket money. I know that. Don't you have, Jyothi? Yeah, they all have money.

In nineteen sixties, in Hong Kong, if I'm right. There was this gentleman who was given this vision by God about building or buying a huge facility for missionaries to come, to live, to stay and to have meetings. He went all around America, US, tired all the meetings, everything because he needed millions of dollars. When he came back to Hong Kong not even one dollar came. He was so disappointed, so disappointed because not a single penny came because he automatically thought, "God has given me a mission, let me raise the money." One day in the mail comes a letter and the letter is written from Tracy. And he looks and says, "Tracy, in all the meetings I went, I don't remember any lady called Tracy." And he opened it and saw Tracy was a small girl and written saying, "Uncle, I was in one of your meetings, so I heard about your vision and I'm sure God is going to answer you and bless you and here is my gift. One dollar." A multimillion facility was under auction, nobody to buy it, gave him the entire facility for one dollar. And in the past forty years, at least one point five or six million people have come and gone through that facility and they say at least two hundred and fifty thousand people made a commitment to follow Christ in that facility, bought with one dollar from a child.

Do you believe? He's still the same God, He doesn't change. He's still the same God. That's why God says, "What you hear and how you hear." The Kingdom of God is built by faith." All things are possible with God, all things are possible with him or her who believes.

Shall we stand this morning, in faith. Those who nodded off can stand up by faith now. If you are really serious about hearing from God. One thing you do, Saturday evenings, keep it free. Don't talk, spend time alone with God, go to bed early, wake up early, come to church, you will hear very clearly, absolutely clearly. The problem is we talk, talk. What do we talk? We talk to everybody, except God. He's the only one who is actually interested in a conversation with us. He's the only one who really listen. Even when we talk to each other we don't listen to each other. Isn't it true? That's the usual complain, "You never listen to me." Wives are you with me? "You never listen to me," that's what every wife tells. But when Elijah was talking, God listened to him very carefully. Only when he was factually wrong, God says, "That is not right."

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Do you know there is somebody who really listens when you talk and that's Jesus? He really listens. When you are factually wrong, He will say, "That's not right, that's not the way it was." And we won't talk to Him; we talk to everybody else. Yet nobody has the words of life except Him. He said, "My words are Spirit and life." This year, let us learn to talk to Him and more than that. Listen to Him. One Word from God, one Word from God can change your life, change your destiny. One Word. This year, everyone should have heard from God personally, one on one. Ongoing relationship with the living God. Let the river flow unhindered. We don't serve a God who does not speak or who does not hear, a mute idol. We serve a living God, Emmanuel God with us.

Closing Prayer

Father this morning we come to You, as on Mount Carmel, Father, let the lordship of Jesus Christ be established in every life. Little by little, day by day but definitely Lord, let Your lordship be established in every area of our lives. We need to hear. We don't have to be anxious, because You are there with us. We don't have to worry unless we have sinned against You and done things against Your ways, if then we just need to put it right because You're merciful and compassionate towards us. Touch Your people who are down, who are depressed, who are discouraged. Let the scales fall from their eyes, O God, let the blindfold be removed from our eyes, the wax from our ears that we may hear Your voice and see. When Elisha's servant panicked, he prayed one simple prayer, "Lord, open his eyes." Because the servant saw, the prophet wasn't moved at all, though the mountain was surrounded by the armies of the enemy. Elisha wasn't moved because he could see God's provision. I pray for everyone who is scared, who is fearful, open their eyes that they may see the provision of their Father, they may feel and acknowledge and know the strength of the hand of their Father upon their lives. Touch their ears that they may hear that You are the same God who came to the closed room where the disciples have gathered in fear of the Jews and You told them first, "Fear not." Let them hear the same voice today Lord, "Fear not, for I am with you. I will never leave you, never forsake you. I am with you." Let people, here, hear O Lord that in the year of famine like Isaac they will hear, "Sow in famine that you may reap a hundredfold, that they may be plenty in God's Kingdom." In the year of famine let them hear as Joseph heard, "Store and when the famine comes, open up the store houses of Egypt so that My people may have bread. Let young men store their hearts with the Word of God, O Lord, so that when the hour and the season come, they can open up their store houses and tell the world, "Come and feed of me, I was not idle in the days of my youth." God's children, God's people have not been given the spirit of fear but the Spirit of love and the Spirit of sound mind. Let that mind manifest, let it perceive and understand the secret things of God. What was hidden from the prophets of old, You said that it will be revealed to the Children of today. Touch Lord, touch ears, touch eyes. Open our understanding. Everything that was concealed reveal God, reveal because we are hungry for more of You, more of Your Kingdom. Not to be proud but to be used. To be poured out, to be a blessing. Thank You, Father. Go before us through this week, especially tomorrow. As a church, people from different churches homes gather for this wedding, You be there as You were there at the wedding at Cana. Be there, O' Lord. Let everyone's joy be complete because You are there. Be there Lord. Thank You, Father, thank You. I just bless Your holy name, bless Your holy name. Thank You, Lord. For in Jesus' precious name we pray.

Benediction

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of us, Amen.