

Can you hear me?

Good, that was part of the sermon.

Of course you can hear me.

And oftentimes you might remember those commercials that Verizon had that always asked, can you hear me now?

You see, what was being asked and what I asked was, are you hearing these sound waves that are coming from my mouth and hitting your ears?

That's what I'm asking when I said, can you hear me?

But every parent here and every child...

knows the difference when a parent said to them, do you hear me?

And quite frankly, as we look at our passage today, there's a difference between hearing and actually listening.

There's a difference between knowing that there's sound out there and then recognizing that those words are calling us to obey or to act or to respond.

So, the difference is between hearing as noise and hearing as understanding or hearing as obedience.

And that's exactly what the Bible is saying right here in this passage when we read, hear, O Israel.

They're not being asked if they can hear what's being said.

No, that's not what's being communicated.

God was speaking in ways that terrified them.

But rather, what's being asked of them is, is this something that you believe?

And is this something that impacts the way that you now view all of life and the world and how you deal with difficulties or how you understand what the purpose of life truly is?

Do you and can you hear me?

But do you hear me?

Today, I want to make sure that you can answer the question that you have heard.

You see, I have a responsibility in my role to communicate God's Word to you.

But yours isn't passive.

You can't just sit there and say, well, I heard the sermon today, meaning you heard me speak.

But rather, every week, as part of our worship, because we've been called into the presence of God, is that we have this time of consecration.

We have this time in which command is given, where it is expected of all of us to hear.

And not just hear as if there is just, yeah, I heard it, I heard it, I heard it, or even I've heard that before, but rather hearing that changes the very way that you think, live.

behave.

So that's why in worship after God calls us and cleanses us completely and fully of all of our sin, He speaks.

And the question is never, did you hear the sound?

The question is always, will you live by what it says?

I mean, think about it.

Many young mom have yelled out in panic as they've seen their child run towards the street chasing a ball.

And they yell, stop.

And the idea is that, yes, the child hears, but if that child doesn't stop, did that child truly hear?

Tragedy can follow.

Or how about those of you who served in the military?

If a commanding officer gave a directive during a training exercise or during a battle that

And you said, yeah, I heard you.

But if there was not an immediate response or action, did that person, did that soldier, sailor, coastie actually hear?

Or you students, if the teacher says, this chapter will be on the test, do you hear me?

It's really those who actually then go home and study that chapter that heard.

So when you leave here and you say, oh, did you hear the sermon?

You might say, oh, yes, I heard the sermon.

Did you hear God's Word being read?

Yes, I heard God's Word being read.

The reality is, and what's being commanded here, is that it's more than just giving ear service or even lip service, but you leaving saying, my life now has to be different.

My life now has to be more in line with what I've heard.

I need to act upon what I now know.

Do you hear me?

So, what we have here is known as the Shema.

It's the Hebrew word for hear, Shema, hear.

In fact, this is a prayer that is prayed regularly by most faithful Jewish individuals.

They declare this truth.

It's almost a profession of faith.

It's a statement of belief.

Hear, O Israel, Shema, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

That's a statement of belief.

That is something that is heard.

And then the command is in this Shema,

is that you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Now, in the New Testament, Matthew, Jesus adds mind, and that was important because for the Greek readers and non-Jewish individuals, they needed to hear that actual mind part, although for every faithful Israel, they understood that this encompassed everyone.

So, as this passage that we're looking at is known as the Shema,

It doesn't just mean hear like, okay, you heard it, but rather it is a statement of what do you believe, and then what does your life look like afterwards?

You see, we are called to listen.

And so today, we're just going to look at three things, how we are to hear His Word, how we are to honor His Word, and then finally, how we are to heed His

His Word.

So, to hear His Word, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

This is what is being communicated.

That when we are called to love God with all of our heart, it's not just feelings.

When we think, oh, our heart, we think of feelings.

For the Israelite, for the Hebrew, they recognize that our heart is where our passion and our desires and our emotion is.

So what is being communicated here is that you're to love God with all of your desires and all of your passion, that the love of God should be what moves you.

And think about what we do for love.

and what we're willing to do for love.

And the idea is that in loving God with our desires, with our hopes, with our dreams, it ultimately helps us frame times when the things that we're experiencing aren't necessarily dreamy.

But when our hope is in God, then external circumstances, when our passions and our desires are more about Him and His glory, then the things ultimately in this life take second place to it.

Even the love of a spouse is second place to the love and the desire of

and the heart that we ought to have for God.

Levah is the Hebrew word for heart.

It's undivided loyalty.

It's the control center of your will, your thoughts, your affections.

All your soul, nefesh.

Now, for us, we always think of soul as that being within us.

That ultimately lives forever and when it's absent from the body is present with the Lord.

That's how we understand soul and that's how it's kind of communicated in the New Testament.

But for the Israelite, this means their life.

This means their job.

This means their family relationships.

This means their material possessions.

Everything about their lives.

All that they are doing.

All that they are to be is first and foremost to be loving God.

with your entire life.

Not just Sunday mornings for an hour or two, but all of life being lived loving God.

That's what a soul is.

So it's not a spiritual aspect.

What's being communicated is your life.

So all your passions, all your desires, your entire heart, your dreams, your hopes, everything are in God.

Now your life then is lived loving God.

So that the words that you say, the things that you do or don't do, how you interact, your life, you're a loving God in your life.

All your life.

Not just part of your life, like I said, not just the Christian part, the spiritual part, the Sunday part, the small group part.

Every part.

Even the driving part.

And all your mind.

Yes, Matthew 22.

It really talks about shaping your thoughts, your worldview, your imagination, and everything focused on God's truth.

But in our passage, all your strength, mind, literally your muchness.

That's what it means.

Love God with your muchness.

Your money, your time, your resources, your home, your possessions, your family, everything.

Your muchness.

You're to love God with that.

All that you have does belong to him.

So in other words, to hear God's word is not to just listen, but to love with every part of who you are.

That's what we're being called to do, to love God with everything that you are.

That's the command.

That's what God is saying.

I've called you to myself.

I have redeemed you and forgiven you of all your sin.

You are mine.

And all of your life is mine.

But notice, we're reading that we are called to love.

To love.

Not just out of duty, but out of love.

Do you love the Lord?

And why we gather together for worship is...

is because we are called by God, we are constantly invited into His presence even though we fail every week.

We confess because we haven't lived all of our life for His glory.

We've sinned and thought word and deed in not doing what we should have done and doing what we shouldn't have.

So, what's being communicated here to hear God's Word is to say that I love

God.

Because what His Word talks about deals with all of our emotion, all of our passion, all of our desires.

What God's Word talks about deals with every aspect of our lives, from our relationships to our occupation, to how we interact in our communities, to our thought lives, to the words that we speak.

And to love God with all that He has given to us and how He has blessed us

and how all of us really have more than we deserve.

And compared to the rest of the world, we are beyond provided for.

And it is in that muchness that we're called to love.

And I was so encouraged to hear of just in the few short months that we've been a part of Care Portal to have given approximately \$15,000 to those who are in need.

We have much.

Our church has much.

And as such, we're able to love God with that muchness.

Think about, if you're married, the wedding vows that you made.

I mean, the couple doesn't say, I'll love you with my emotions, but not with my life.

I'll love you with my mind, but not with my time.

The vow that we give...

is a vow of completeness that we give all to the other.

And that's the kind of love that God calls from each of us, total love, when He says to hear.

Don't just be hearers of the Word is what James reminds us, but be doers.

Secondly, we're called to honor God's Word, and that's to give it a prominent place in your life.

Notice the movement, you know, we're supposed to love on Him with all of our hearts, so there's this aspect where God's Word is to be internalized.

In fact, it says here that the words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

It should be that which directs your passions and

desires?

Are you content?

Are you trusting that where God has you right now is exactly where He wants you to be?

Not by accident, nor by mistake, but by His plan.

And even if you don't like that plan, and even if you don't even understand the plan,

I still know it's a good plan, better than any of my plans, that's for sure.

But we're called to internalize it.

Notice it goes on, and you shall teach them diligently to your children.

Notice how important family is in this next generation.

You can't read God's Word without realizing that God is a God of families and a God of generations, not just of a particular generation.

but generations.

It's good to hear children in a worship service.

And it's good to see individuals who are a little bit more mature than you.

It's good to see the generations.

And we're called to pass it on to the next generation.

And it's not just something that you do once.

Let me tell you, our kids' Sunday school ministry is just kicking off, and we're hoping to continue to build upon it.

Parents, the kids need to be here.

Oh, they've heard it before.

Yeah, they need to hear it again.

And they need to listen.

And you know what?

It's not just kids.

We have a Sunday school hour too.

A time of discipleship.

And maybe you think you've heard it all before.

But you need to listen.

On your homes.

That's what it says.

Talk about it.

When you sit in your house.

And when you walk by the way.

And when you lie down.

And when you rise.

meaning every part of your life should be centered around, even your home life centered around God's Word.

And this is not a hidden word, as we see.

It's a displayed word.

It's interesting as you look at what the Hebrew word actually means that we translate teach diligently.

It actually means to sharpen.

Have you ever sharpened any knives?

I got some Cutco ones.



Send them back and they take care of it.

Well, our children aren't really Cutco.

You can't send them off necessarily.

For Christmas, I got one of those rolling sharpeners.

You ever see those?

They're all over social media.

They are great.

They work so well.

If you've ever tried to actually sharpen a knife on a whetstone, you'll recognize that you, if you don't have any guide of any sort, have to hold that knife precisely in the same position.

As you sharpen it.

Any deviation will basically create a new edge or blunt the edge that you're sharpening.

We've made it very simple.

I connect it to a magnet and roll it back and forth.

They didn't have that.

They recognized that the idea of teaching diligently is to teach consistently and regularly.

Not just once in a while.

almost daily.

These are individuals that used knives as part of their animal husbandry, butchering of other things.

You had to keep your knife sharp.

Steady repetition, consistency.

God calls us to repeat His words so it cuts into our children's hearts.

and even our own hearts, shaping us for life.

And we honor His Word, as it says here, not by hanging something on your door.

In fact, I forgot to bring up my little mezuzah, the thing that has the Ten Commandments on it that you can put on your door frame.

It's not doing just that.

But rather, what is it that your kids see and hear in the home will ultimately shape their vision of God more than anything else?

Do you honor His Word?

Is it part of the conversations that you have around your table?

Is it in the conversations that you have with coworkers, with your spouse, with your neighbors?

We give it the attention that it deserves.

It's as if we're binding it to ourselves.

Put them as frontlets between your eyes.

Now, if you look at some Orthodox Jews, they actually have little phylacteries that they put the commandments in and they bind it to their head or bind it to their arms.

I don't think that's what's being communicated.

I think that's some of the reasons why Jesus said that you strain out, you know, the gnat but swallow the camel.

Individuals that go through the letter of the law but miss the spirit of the law.

To honor His Word means that your thoughts are directed by it.

Your hands and your actions are directed by it.

The way that you view the world, the way that you view your neighbor, the way that you view your enemy, the way that you view difficulties, the way that you view joy or success,

should be directed by the Word of God, and the actions that you take, they should be bound to your hands.

Now, hearing is incomplete without heeding.

God's Word is not advice to consider, it's a command to obey.

God's Word is described as a sword because it cuts through our excuses, it exposes the truth,

And you really can't fake your way out of God's Word or around it.

And we don't need to because we have a God who forgives.

So the idea is what was commanded was the having them on your doorposts.

That's us being, write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

I think there's something that God was saying other than just attaching

mezuzah to your wall, but rather to write it on the door was to live it out every time you left or entered.

You're basically reminding yourself that you and this house belongs to God.

And on the gates, it was for others who traveled, who would come, that they could see and know this is a place where

honors God.

This is the place that obeys His commands.

And we here in the United States, we kind of go through that in a way and did at least in the past where we would have the Ten Commandments posted, or in God we trust on our public buildings.

And there's a lot of people saying, yeah, we need to get back to that.

We need to get prayer back in schools.

Well, is prayer in your house?

You want it on the public building?

Is it on your heart?

Is it known in your home?

Is it seen by others?

So, in heeding God's Word is what being communicated here is that you're going to live it out.

I mean, imagine a pilot in distress ignoring the instructions from air traffic control.

It's going to end in disaster.

Listening requires acting, and so too in worship.

We're to act.

We're to engage.

But as the individuals who first heard this and received this, they were understanding that the doorposts of your houses, every time you go in and out, you're reminded that God's Word governs your home and your conduct.

Your family knows this is how we live.

The gates of your city, the gates where the civic and public space, where the elders met, disputes were judged.

Community life existed there.

Writing God's Word there was a public declaration.

This community lives under God's rules.

So, what does it mean to heed His Word?

Well, we should let God mark your daily going and coming.

God's Word should shape your public witness.

And others should see by your words and action that this is how you live because this is what you truly believe.

Doorposts and gates.

The mezuzah tradition developed from this verse.

A small scroll with a shema affixed to the doorpost.

That's where it comes from.

But just because you post something on your doorpost, because you wear a cross around your neck, or a Christian t-shirt or hat, that's great.

But the reality is, it's your heart.

It's your action.

It's your life.

Does the world see from you and how you live, how you act, how you respond, that you really believe this stuff?

A lot of people will say, well, that's why at our church we have a sign that says you are now entering the mission field as they leave.

I like that.

I'm not against that.

But here's something that I know that they must forget.

This right here is the mission field too.

For me to assume that every one of you is trusting in Jesus would be a mistake.

I hope that's the case.

But I've been doing this for a long time.

And sometimes what we end up doing is just part of the habits and behaviors that we're used to.

And so that's my question to you.

You might have it on your doorpost and gates, but is it in here?

Is it truly up here?

Is it seen with ease out there?

Now you're all like, wow, Pastor, you really...

I'm not pulling any punches today.

You're being pretty mean.

Don't you realize none of us do this well?

Yeah, most of us do it pretty terribly.

But here's where the good news of the gospel is.

Jesus is the Word made flesh.

All this that is written is remind us what we cannot do.

But Jesus is the very Word of God has done it all.

He's obeyed it all.

Not only is it in His heart, in His mind, His soul and strength, it's everything.

He is the Word made flesh.

And so maybe you are feeling the weight.

I haven't loved God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength.

I don't always honor His Word, and I definitely don't always heed it.

And that's why we need more than a Shema.

We need a Savior.

The very beginning of John's Gospel, he says that Jesus is the Word made flesh.

In the beginning was the Word.

The Word was with God.

The Word was God.

He is the one who loved the Father with the perfect heart, soul, mind, and strength.

He honored God's Word at every point, and He heeded it even to the point of the cross.

And now because of His obedience, His Spirit enables us to hear, to honor, and to heed.

And when we don't, His righteousness

is what sustains us.

His crucifixion is what redeems us.

So, friends, don't just hear about God's love, receive it.

Don't just honor His Word with your lips, let it dwell in your heart.

Don't just know His will.

Obey it by His grace.

But have full assurance and confidence that Jesus is the one who has done what you cannot do and offers that to you.

To truly hear God's word is to love Him fully, honor it daily,

And heed it openly.

God calls you not to just show up in worship.

I'm glad you're here, but it's not just that.

Not just to confess your sin, but I encourage you to do that.

But to listen to His Word in order to embody it.

Jesus is the Word made flesh.

But we who are in Him, we're also to flesh out that Word in our lives.

He is the perfect Word.

But you and I still carry in these broken, cracked jars, these clay pots,

The Word of God.

So hear His Word.

Love Him with all that you are.

Honor His Word.

Give it the central place in your life.

Heed His Word.

Obey it with your whole heart.

Because worship is not only where your shame meets God's grace, it's where God's Word shapes your life.

One of the things and areas that has caused concern or discussion has to do with James.

I've mentioned James already in his letter.

He tells us to not just be hearers of the Word, but doers thereof.

In fact, then he gives a statement that causes a lot of people concern.

He says, "'What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?

Can that faith save him?'

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warm and filled without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, you have faith and I have works.

Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Do you believe that God is one?

You do well.

Even the demons believe and shudder.

Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?

You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his work.

And the Scripture fulfilled that says Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness."

and he was called a friend of God.

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

Isn't that scary?

And people say, see, we told you, particularly those in the Roman Catholic Church and others say, no, it's our works that justify us.

I just want to be clear to you that James is not talking about our spiritual justification.

It's very clear from the New Testament that

that you are justified by grace alone, through faith alone and Christ alone.

That's your relationship with God that is established and set because what Christ has done.

And those who are in Christ, there is now therefore no condemnation.

James is not talking about you being justified before God by your works.

If that's the case, then none of us would be justified.

We are justified by our faith in Jesus.

So what is James talking about?

Same thing that Luther mentioned when he said, God doesn't need your good works, your neighbors do.

What James is saying is that there's so many individuals that have the right words and say what they believe and can quote Scripture and can even discuss the intricacies of deep theology, they know even the difference between prolapsarianism and superlapsarianism.

They can quote for you all the documents that are found in the three forms of unity.

They know all of John Calvin's five points.

They know a lot of things.

James basically says, good for you.

I think that's in the New Living Translation.

He's talking about being justified before the world, justified that individuals around you say, this is an individual who hears God's Word, who honors God's Word, who heeds God's Word.

He's saying you can talk all the theology you want.

You can go to all the Bible studies that are available.

You can go to church every time the doors are opened.

But the issue is, it's how you live your life.

Is your heart, your desires and your passions, your wants, is your contentment found in the things that God desires?

Not in what this world offers.

Do you honor God's Word?

Do you, when you make a decision,

Seek the Lord's will.

Seek the counsel of godly individuals.

Read His Word.

Do you honor it?

Is it something that is taught in your home, read in your home, lived in your home?



And more than that, is it on the gates and on your doorway so that it's really lived out in the places where people see?

Worship is not just about being called or showing up.

It's coming because we've been called, confessing because we are sinners who are in need of His grace, and being consecrated and commanded to live our lives based upon what He has said.

That's my hope for my life.

That's my hope for the season that I'm in right now.

And even if I don't always feel it or like it, I do believe it.

And I hope by God's grace you see it in me.

And I hope by God's grace others see it in you.