Hearing God in 2016

Message # 4: The deafening impact of fear and shame on our willingness to hear.

# Introduction: We often try to avoid listening –

I received an email with a link to the results of a recent blood test. It took me a long time before I clicked on that link to view the results, which were all ok. Why the hesitation? First, was the fear of the unknown. I had no control over the results and, in many ways, preferred not knowing what those results might be. If I don’t know, then I don’t have to change. Second, was the shame of the known. I knew what the Dr. would say to me after he saw my results, “you need to exercise and do a better job with your diet.” If I never looked at the results I would never have to experience the shame of admitting I was not doing what I was supposed to be doing or doing what I wasn’t supposed to be doing. Who wants to admit that? (Yes, I was told to exercise and watch my diet)

Maybe you have experienced something similar. Maybe it was a blood test, but a job interview or a report card. Fear and shame kept you from honestly exploring the truth. Maybe you’ve experienced it in a relationship. Fear and shame have kept you from honestly listening to your spouse and their feelings. What if I ask and my spouse doesn’t love me anymore? What if I ask and I am confronted with my behavior? Fear and shame often give us a deaf ear to the truth.

Maybe you say the fact that God seems distant or your spiritual walk is dry is because you are not really trying to listen to God. Maybe, you are afraid of the unknown of following God no matter what? Maybe, you are ashamed to truly seek God because you think the bad you’ve done in your life is simply to great; you’re ashamed and confident that a Holy God will never speak to someone like you.

This morning we will be address how we can overcome the fear of the unknown and the shame of the known in our spiritual journey of hearing God.

# Overcoming fear of the unknown by trusting in the goodness and love of God.

1. [1 John 4: 16-19.](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+john+4%3A+16-19&version=NIV) We embrace the known of God’s love and the fear is removed when God’s love is experienced.
2. [John 14:26-27.](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14%3A26-27&version=NIV) We embrace the peace of God

# Overcoming the shame of the known by trusting in God’s grace

1. [Ephesians 2:8-9.](8%20For%20it%20is%20by%20grace%20you%20have%20been%20saved%2C%20through%20faith%E2%80%94and%20this%20is%20not%20from%20yourselves%2C%20it%20is%20the%20gift%20of%20God%E2%80%94%209%20not%20by%20works%2C%20so%20that%20no%20one%20can%20boast.) Shame is removed when we realize that our good works do not earn us God’s grace and our sins will not keep us from his grace. It is a gift received in faith.
2. [I Timothy 1:15-16.](1%20Timothy%201%3A15-16) [Romans 5:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3A8&version=NIV). The acts of your past that are causing you embarrassment and shame are not worse than those who you think have all their “stuff” together. We have all sinned and all fallen short. Even the apostle Paul, who considered himself the chief sinner, was not beyond the reach of grace.
3. [Romans 8:1-2.](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A1-2&version=NIV) [John 8: 1-11.](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+8%3A1-11&version=NIV)  Shame is removed when we live into the truth that in Christ there is no condemnation, when there is no one to cast the first stone.

# Fear and shame are overcome by God’s forgiveness as we offer our honest confession.

* [I john 1:8-9.](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1%3A8-9&version=NIV)  When are assured of receiving God’s complete and total forgiveness through our honest confession.

# For further reflection:

“*THE QUESTION is not whether the things that happen to you are chance things or God's things because, of course, they are both at once. There is no chance thing through which God cannot speak—even the walk from the house to the garage that you have walked ten thousand times before, even the moments when you cannot believe there is a God who speaks at all anywhere. He speaks, I believe, and the words he speaks are incarnate in the flesh and blood of ourselves and of our own footsore and sacred journeys. We cannot live our lives constantly looking back, listening back, lest we be turned to pillars of longing and regret, but to live without listening at all is to live deaf to the fullness of the music. Sometimes we avoid listening for fear of what we may hear, sometimes for fear that we may hear nothing at all but the empty rattle of our own feet on the pavement…. "Be not afraid,"…"for lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." He says he is with us on our journeys. He says he has been with us since each of our journeys began. Listen for him. Listen to the sweet and bitter airs of your present and your past for the sound of him.”*

- from The Sacred Journey and Listening to Your Life