

ATTITUDE #1 FOR THE NEW YEAR—HUNGER TO HEAR GOD!

INTRODUCTION:

I mentioned not too long ago that when it comes to preaching in the new year, I feel like this year has been like **missing a train**—it took off without me and I'm still running to try to catch up! So, although this is the 4th Sunday of 2021, I still felt led to share with you some *attitudes* we should have going into a new year—or a new Presidency—take your pick!

Not surprisingly, because they are from God's Word, they are appropriate for **all** times of the year—not just the beginning of it! Please note that I'm not attempting to give them to you in *order of importance* because they are **all** important—and all kind of intertwine with one another.

Please turn to Psalm 85:8-13 (read). The attitude I want us to focus on this morning is found in v 8: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak..." Attitude #1, then, is: *A Hunger to Hear God!*

Why is a hunger to hear God an important attitude to have at the beginning of the year—and all year long? Before we discuss reasons, I want us to consider....

1. The Range of Choices in who to listen to

Mark Ps 85—we will be coming back here—but I want us to turn to Acts 17 to notice a characteristic of Paul's day that is quite similar to what we are experiencing today.

- Acts 17:16-17 "disputed with Jews...and devout persons...daily"
- v 18 "what will this babbler say?" "setter forth of strange gods"
- v 19-20 "bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know what they mean"
- v 21 "spent their time in nothing else, but either **to tell**, or to **hear** some new thing."

Sure sounds familiar, doesn't it? Although that is not **all** we do—most of us are **not full-time** "information gatherers"—we sure have a lot of "**choices in voices**" to listen to—even if we don't have a computer or tablet!

--There is Christian talk-radio to listen to—like Brannon Howse and Crosstalk on VCY—and a whole slew of **political** talk-show hosts we can listen to as well

--There are books...and magazines...and newspapers to read

There is ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC, and Fox to choose from—as well as Breitbart, Newsmax & One America News.

And if you **have** a computer, iphone, or tablet, the number of voices to choose to listen to is almost endless!

--There are **preachers** like Greg Locke...and **predicters** like Lance Wallnau...and **psychologists** like Dr Steve Turley that share their views about what is happening in the W—and what they think will hapn in Fut!

--There is Alex Neumann...and Dan Bongino...and the X22 report...and Q Anon...and countless Youtube videos that you can view to try to "figure out" what is going on "behind the scenes."

--And don't forget the **financial experts** that tell you to **sell** this stock...and **buy** that one...and buy **gold** ...and don't have your money tied to an electronic bank system...and that **cash is king!**

I don't think I'm going out on a limb to suggest that we can easily find **ourselves** spending our time "in **nothing else**, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" like Luke said of the Athenians here in Acts 17:21!

And because there is such a wide *range* of choices to make, we have to **make** choices. We have to say "**yes**" to listen to some—and "**no**" to listen to others—because we can't possibly listen to **everyone and everything!**

So the question is: **Who—or what**—are you going to listen to? And how do you decide?

Back to Psalm 85:8

First, we noted the range of possibilities.

Second....**2. The Resolve to choose to hear God**

“I will hear what God the LORD will speak”

A. Personal decision

“**I...**” Each of us has to make a personal decision on **who**—or **what**—we will listen to.

--I **can't make the decision for you**; you can't make the decision **for me**. Someone will ask me to read this book.... or listen to a sermon from this guy.... or make sure not to miss a message on Crosstalk...but it is ultimately **up to me** to decide if I'm going to do that or not.

--We can't make the decision for **our family members**. I can't decide for my wife who she listens to—and she can't decide for me! I can't decide for my **adult children**—and they can't decide for me!

--But we can—and must—decide **for our children** if they are under our roof and are **not** adults. If you let your children watch **whatever** they want, **whenever** they want, you are **failing** as a parent!

Not just a personal decision, it is also a... B. Purposeful decision

“I **will** hear...” It is a **purposeful** decision—meaning it is **not** left to chance. It is a **determination**—a **resolve**—a **planned course of action**—to hear what God says. We already noted earlier that because there are so many voices to listen to, we need to make a conscious choice. It will not **happen** by itself. Just as Daniel “purposed in his heart not to defile himself” (Dan 1:8), we need to “purpose” in our heart that **we will listen** to what God says!

Barnes suggests the attitude of the Psalmist was this: “*Whatever God should **command**, the speaker was willing to yield to it; whatever God should **say**, he would believe; whatever God should **enjoin**, he would do; whatever God should **ask him to surrender**, he would resign. There was no other **resource but God**, and there was entire **confidence in Him** that whatever He should say, require, or do, **would be right**.*”

It is a personal decision, a purposeful decision, and a... C. Proper decision

“I will hear what **God the LORD will speak...**”

--Not, ‘I will hear what the **church** will speak!’

--Not, ‘I will hear what this **family member or friend** will speak!’

--Not, ‘I will hear what this **preacher...or predictor...or politician** will speak!’

What does it say? “I will hear what **God the LORD will speak...**”

Is there a better, more proper decision, than to listen to what **God** says? There isn't, is there?

--So why do we listen to God so **infrequently**?

--Why do we want to hear what **everyone else says** before we hear what God says?

Here's a **challenge** for all of us: Do you give the **same amount** of time to **hear what God says** as you do to listen to all the **other “voices”** in your day?

--We should listen to what God says **more—way more**—and yet sadly, in many cases, we listen to Him **less—far less....**

First, we saw the **range of choices** we have in who we listen to, then the **resolve that we should have** to listen to God. Lastly, I would like for us to consider the **reasons** we should hear—listen to—what God says.

3. The Reasons to choose to hear God

Why should we resolve to listen to God first and foremost, above everyone and everything else?

There are a number of reasons, not only in this passage but throughout the Bible. I want us to consider just 3.

A. Because of who God is

We should listen to God because **God is God**. But what does that mean? How would you go about defining God? I'm not going to even attempt to do this, but here are some characteristics that should encourage us to listen to Him; to “hear what God the Lord will speak.”

--We should hear what God speaks because God is **all-knowing and** knows the end from the beginning. So why do we listen **to men** to learn about the future instead of God the one who **brings about** the future?

--We should hear what God speaks because God is the **source of truth**. So why do we put so much trust in **truth according to men** instead of God who is the **giver of truth** and whose **name is Truth!**

--We should hear what God speaks because God is the Sovereign King who rules **over everyone and everything and does whatever He wants to do**. So why are we discouraged and fret when puny man seems to be “beating” God and “winning” in the battle between good and evil?

We need to listen to God because He knows the end from the beginning, is in control of all things, and is the source of truth and wisdom!

We also need to listen to God... B. Because He tells us to!

i. God wanted the people of Israel to listen to Him

Exodus 15:26 “And said, If thou wilt diligently **hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God**, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt **give ear to His commandments**, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee.”

ii. God wants us to hear the words of Jesus

Luke 9:35 “And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: **hear Him.**”

iii. Jesus said His followers would listen to Him

John 10:27 “My sheep **hear my voice**, and I know them, and they follow me:”

iv. We are to hear God’s voice today and not harden our hearts

Hebrews 3:7-18, 15; 4:7 “To day if ye will **hear His voice**, harden not your hearts...”

v. We are to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches

We see that at the end of each letter Christ wrote to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3

We should have a ***hunger to hear God***—we should have the attitude that “I will hear what God the Lord will speak—because He ***is God*** and because **He tells us to**. There is a third reason, though, and one that is of particular importance to us today and it is this:

C. Because He speaks peace unto His people!

God speaks ***peace*** to His people... but what is peace? What is the **picture** that comes to mind when you hear the word ***peace***? For me, it is a **baby** fast asleep on the shoulder of his or her mother! There’s more to it than that, though, isn’t there?

i. Pleasantness of peace

Again, what is peace? It is more than just a ***baby sleeping*** contentedly, but how would you define it?

Here are a few **dictionary definitions** that fit the context here: “rest; state of tranquility or quiet; security, freedom from anxiety, fear, or trouble.”

Is peace ***pleasant***? It certainly is—unless you have to **give up a lot** to obtain peace! But we are not talking about peace with warring factions; we are talking about peace that God gives!

ii. Pursuit of peace

Let’s consider next the ***pursuit*** of peace. Do people ***desire*** peace? Are they ***looking*** for peace and pursuing it? There are obviously groups of people that are against peace, but for the most part we ***desire*** peace. Isn’t that ***why*** we listen to certain voices?

--We are looking for some news...some truth...some wisdom that will help us make sense of what is going on in our country from a Biblical view.

--We want to hear things that help us understand how “the ***best*** is yet to come” when many believe our current President was put there by cheating

--We want to hear things that assure us that **evil will be exposed**—and that truth will triumph!

And so we look for—and listen to—voices that will give us that message that we believe will bring peace!

Should we be looking to men to speak words of peace? No! Why?

Because... **iii. The person of peace is God**

V 8 “...for He [God] will speak peace unto His people...”

--We believe we will have peace when we hear how the future will turn out—as long as it turns out the way we want!

--But **men don't know the future**—nor can they control it—so why look **to them** for peace?

If we want peace that passes all understanding—that allows us to have a calm and restful spirit in a time of chaos—we need to look **to God**. Think of some of the times Jesus came to the disciples with words of peace.

--In Mark 4 we read about a fierce storm where the disciples and Jesus were on a small ship. The disciples were scared to death, but Jesus was sleeping. They woke Him and said, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?"³⁹ And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.⁴⁰ And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" (Mk 4:39-40).

--In the upper room, before His death, Jesus said:

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

--After He was crucified, He appeared unto His disciples and said, "Peace be unto you." (John 20:19)

Don't look **to men** for messages of peace—look to **God** and the messages of peace in His Word!

And then notice the **iv. Promise to speak peace**: "for He **will** speak peace..."

It does not say, "for He **might** speak peace"—it says He **will**! The promises of comfort and peace are found throughout God's Word & we should **mark them in our Bibles** when we find them so we can find them again!

Psalm 29:11 "The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will **bless His people with peace**."

Isaiah 26:3 "**Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace**, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, **thoughts of peace**, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken unto you, **that in me ye might have peace**. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Back to verse 8 once again. Who does God make this promise of peace to?

v. Peace promised to God's people

Peace is not promised to **everyone**; I believe that is emphasized here in this verse: "...for He will speak peace unto **His** people, and to **His** saints:"

Contrast this verse with **Isaiah 48:22 and 57:21** "**There is no peace**, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." If the **wicked** have no peace—and there is no peace in their future—God certainly **won't speak peace** to them.

So, if God **will** speak peace to His people—but **will not** speak peace to the wicked—the natural question, then, should be: But who are **God's people**—and who are the **wicked**?

Let's consider first, who God's people are. How do we become one of God's people?

John 1:12; let's turn there. It is important for you to see this for yourself.

"But as many as **received Him**..." Who is the Him? Look at v 10. It is the one who was **in the world**...and who **made the world**...but was **not recognized** by the world. In v 11 we see that He came to His own people—and they **received Him not**. Who is the Him? Jesus!

There are those that **did not** receive Him—and there are those that **did** receive Him.

What happens to those who **receive Him**? "To them"—the receivers—"gave He power"—meaning **authority**—"to become the sons of God..." Those that receive Jesus as their Savior become God's people.

Those who **do not receive Jesus**—the rejectors—are not God's people; **they are the wicked**. Being wicked does not require that you do a certain **amount** of wickedness. Truth be told, we are **all wicked**...we are all sinful...we all fall short of God's standard to get into heaven. You don't have to **do anything to become** wicked—you already are! But you can become "unwicked"—and one of God's people—by trusting Jesus.

So what does God want us to do in light of what we have heard from His Word today?

1. First, you need to receive Jesus as your Savior if you haven't done that. You can never have true peace in this life—or the next—if you are not one of God's children.
2. We need to be honest about **who** we listen to—and why we listen to them. Are we looking to men to bring peace? If so, we need to stop looking to men—and start looking to God.
3. Some of us, I believe, need to make a conscious decision to start listening to God more.