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Sermon Notes

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Christ Listened to His Father to Save Those Who Listen to Him

Isaiah 50:1-11

The human ear is a stunning marvel of God's creation!

The softest audible sound has an energy equivalent to that given off by a 50-watt light bulb at a distance of 3000 miles. The movement involved here is sub-microscopic - it displaces the eardrum by a distance of *one-tenth the diameter* of a hydrogen atom. This is one four-millionth part of the diameter of a fine silk thread. It is a response to a sound pressure change of one billionth of atmospheric pressure (10^{-9} atm).

It can also respond meaningfully to sounds up to 10 trillion (10^{13}) times greater in intensity, at the threshold of pain. This range of response is so vast that a rock band playing at 90dB is actually producing sounds a billion times more intense than the softest whisper.

One of the most amazing aspects of the ear is its ability to listen selectively to a whole array of sounds... it can single something out and focus on it. In a crowded room full of laughing, talking people and noisy music, you can zero in on a conversation you're having with one person. A mother can hear her child cry in a crowded playground full of other kids and their parents. When listening to a symphony orchestra, you can focus on one instrument among a hundred – the flute or the oboe or the violin soloist.

GOD MADE THE EAR TO HEAR... and He filled the world with amazing sounds... the powerful sounds of an electrical storm, with deep rolling thunder... the delicate sound of a newborn breathing softly in her sleep on your chest... and everything in between.

Amazingly, God has chosen the organ of hearing – the ear – to be the way by which our sinful souls are saved... *"Faith comes by hearing the word..."* But we are able to TUNE OUT God's word, to hear its sounds but not listen to its message.

The unifying theme of this brief chapter is listening to God. Again and again, God spoke to Israel through the prophets. Again and again, they refused to listen to Him. Isaiah the prophet was commissioned by God in chapter 6 to go to a people, and God warned Isaiah ahead of time that they would NOT LISTEN to him:

Isaiah 6:8-10 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"⁹ He said, "Go and tell this people: "'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.'¹⁰ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

Isaiah was told that their refusal to listen would result in their destruction:

Isaiah 6:11-12 Then I said, "For how long, O Lord?" And he answered: "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged,¹² until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken."

So we're going to see in Isaiah 50, the same problem is addressed... only now, God is speaking to the remnant that were sent away to Babylon, into exile... explaining WHY their fathers and mothers were exiled... and warning them to listen.

But the chapter also points to Someone who would listen perfectly to God... and that someone is the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. He would listen on our behalf... listen perfectly to God, listen to everything God told Him to do or say... listen with a perfectly submissive and obedient heart... listen even to the point of death, even death on a cross.

He would do this to save a people for Himself... but those people would be saved OUT OF THEIR HARDNESS OF HEART INTO A WHOLE NEW PATTERN OF OBEDIENCE TO GOD... their hearts of stone would be removed and hearts of submissive yieldedness to God would be replaced. And instead of spiritual DEAFNESS, they would be characterized at last by the same LISTENING EARS that characterized their Savior

Again and again, Jesus Christ called on his hearers to consider carefully how they listen to God's word (Luke 8:18), and often finished his teachings with the words, "Anyone who has ears should listen!"

Isaiah 50 is about LISTENING... The chapter begins with God speaking to the Jewish nation, explaining the reasons for the exile – what they were and what they weren't – and it all came down to their failure to listen to God

when he called. The chapter continues with a remarkable section of prophecy exposing the heart of the ministry of the Servant of the Lord – Jesus Christ. The essence was his perfect commitment to listen to everything his Father told him and to obey him even to the point of death on a cross. Along with that was Jesus' perfect teachings, and the sweet sustenance his words give to the weary. The chapter ends with a fork in the road; will you listen to the Servant or will you listen to your own wisdom. The ends of those divergent roads couldn't be more infinitely separated: heaven for those who trust in the Servant's words, and hell for those who don't.

I pray you will hear Christ speaking to you now through its words!

I. A Nation Who Refused to Listen Sent into Exile (vs. 1-3)

A. Israel Not Divorced, Only Sent Away for Sin (vs.1)

Isaiah 50:1 This is what the LORD says: "Where is your mother's certificate of divorce with which I sent her away? Or to which of my creditors did I sell you? Because of your sins you were sold; because of your transgressions your mother was sent away.

1. God is speaking to the Exiles languishing in Babylon, explaining why their fathers and mothers were exiled
2. Note: Remember that Isaiah the prophet is writing these amazing words 125 years at least before the exile even happened!
3. Isaiah is using a common metaphor for the relationship between God and His people: MARRIAGE... Israel is the spouse of God, and had been unfaithful to Him, running after other gods
 - a. Jeremiah would use this image powerfully

Jeremiah 2:2-3 "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown. ³ Israel was holy to the LORD

- b. Ezekiel 16 used this same image... God finding Jerusalem and marrying her
 - c. Hosea the prophet was commanded to marry Gomer, a prostitute, to act out how betrayed God felt at Israel's idolatry
4. God is saying that Zion (their mother) was sent away because of her sins

5. It was important for the exiles and the future generations of Jews to remember this and know it... Israel was not the victim... Israel was being punished for sin
6. BUT God had not cast her off utterly nor finally divorced her...
7. He is telling them to go rummage through the registry of deeds and see if they can find a certificate of divorce... there IS NONE
8. Neither will they find that God had SOLD HER to another master and now had no legal claim on her... Israel STILL BELONGED TO GOD

B. Israel Refused to Listen to the Sovereign God (vs. 2)

Isaiah 50:2 When I came, why was there no one? When I called, why was there no one to answer? Was my arm too short to ransom you? Do I lack the strength to rescue you? By a mere rebuke I dry up the sea, I turn rivers into a desert; their fish rot for lack of water and die of thirst.

1. Now God develops plainly the sin pattern that led to the exile... they REFUSED TO LISTEN when God spoke to them through the prophets
2. WHY DID NO ONE ANSWER ME when I called?? Why are you so spiritually deaf? When I summoned you to come and obey, why did no one come???

C. God Still Omnipotent and Able to Save (vs. 2-3)

Isaiah 50:2-3 Was my arm too short to ransom you? Do I lack the strength to rescue you? By a mere rebuke I dry up the sea, I turn rivers into a desert; their fish rot for lack of water and die of thirst. I clothe the sky with darkness and make sackcloth its covering."

1. The Exile did not happen because God was not strong enough to prevent it... it wasn't as though God could defeat the Egyptians and the Assyrians, but the Babylonians were just too strong for Him
2. AND He wants them to know He is still powerful enough to rescue them from the exile and bring them back to Judea
3. God reminds them of His awesome power! He can still rescue them, even from the bondage of exile to Babylon... He can still do what He did when He rescued them from bondage in Egypt.... By the Red Sea crossing
4. GOD CAN STILL DO ALL THAT!!! He is every bit as powerful after the seventy year exile as He was centuries ago!

II. A Servant Who Listened Perfectly Sent as Savior (vs. 4-9)

A. The Servant Speaks of His Perfect Obedience (vs. 4)

Isaiah 50:4 The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.

1. By direct contrast, we have the Servant of the Lord...
2. Israel was sent into exile because they refused to listen to God
3. And when He rescues them from Exile, they will still be rebellious and willful and unwilling to listen to the Lord
4. So God must send a Savior, the Suffering Servant, to listen on their behalf, obey God on their behalf, suffer on their behalf, die on their behalf
5. At the center of the Suffering Servant's life is a LISTENING EAR, a SUBMISSIVE HEART
6. Jesus is speaking to us in verses 4-9... we hear His words centuries before He was born of the Virgin Mary! Centuries before He was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in the manger... centuries before He was presented to Israel as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world... centuries before He began His ministry of miracles and parables and disciples...
7. These verses give us an AMAZING INSIGHT into the intimacy of His relationship with His heavenly Father... how submissively He listened to everything the Father told Him to do, even to the point of suffering great persecution for the words He spoke
8. Verse 4: Jesus says that God the Father has given him AN INSTRUCTED TONGUE... Jesus' words were perfect medicine for a world sick with sin
9. Jesus says the Father TAUGHT HIM WHAT TO SAY... and specifically the WORD THAT SUSTAINS THE WEARY
10. We go beyond this to look at the details of Jesus' private devotional life... He says the Father WAKENS HIM MORNING BY MORNING, and WAKENS HIS EAR TO LISTEN LIKE ONE BEING TAUGHT
11. Here we have the perfect submission of God the Son to God the Father... and the aspects of His incarnation
 - a. In heaven, God the Son neither slumbers nor sleeps
 - b. BUT ON EARTH, Jesus got tired and had to sleep...
 - c. But every morning, Jesus awoke while it was still dark... and went to a remote place and had His quiet time with the Father... and that time set up everything He was to do that day

Mark 1:35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

The Father TAUGHT Jesus every day of His life!! What an amazing concept...
Jesus was GOD, but He still had to LEARN

Luke 2:52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Throughout His life, Jesus learned directly from the Father – He learned the Scriptures, right interpretation of passages, how to instruct the people, what to say to everything... He learned morning by morning

Jesus' enemies were AMAZED at His teaching:

John 7:15-16 The Jews were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having studied?" ¹⁶ Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me.

So, the Father taught Him his doctrine... and specific words to say:

John 14:24, "The word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me."

No one in history has spoken like this man, as even the temple police who were sent to arrest him testified (John 7:46).

And in direct fulfillment of verse 4 of this chapter, his words were amazingly comforting to brokenhearted sinners. For example, he said to a paralyzed man who had faith,

"Have courage, son, your sins are forgiven." (Matthew 9:2)

Later in that same chapter, he said to a chronically sick woman whom the Father had healed directly,

"Have courage, daughter, your faith has healed you." (Matthew 9:22)

And to the human race, crushed by sin and guilt, fearing eternal condemnation, he said

***"Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
(Matthew 11:28)***

The summary statement:

John 12:49-50 I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. ⁵⁰ I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

12. Jesus' words are ASTONISHING... they are "spirit" and they are "life" (John 6:63)

13. Isaiah 50:4 ushers us into the secret chamber of Jesus' quiet times, and how the Father taught Him what to say to broken-hearted sinners

B. The Servant Speaks of His Humble Submission to Abuse (vs. 5-6)

Isaiah 50:5-6 The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back. I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.

1. Not only did the Father give Jesus words to say; He also gave Him works to do

2. Verse 5 shows Jesus' SUBMISSION to OBEY the Father's will

3. "Opened ears" refers to a submissive heart, an obedient heart

John 5:36 the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.

John 17:4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

John 8:29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.

4. The Father's commands led to GREAT SUFFERING... and in verse 5, Jesus says He was not rebellious, He did not DRAW BACK

5. Perfect picture of this: Gethsemane

Matthew 26:39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

Matthew 26:42 He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

6. The prophecy in Isaiah 50:6 speaks plainly of the suffering the Christ would have to go through to save us from our sins

a. He didn't refuse the suffering

b. He offered His back to those who beat Him

c. He offered His cheeks to those who pulled out His beard

d. He did not hide His holy face from mocking and spitting...

7. Here we have the humble Savior, led like a lamb to the slaughter... all of this abuse would come on Him... and it was all part of His atoning work

8. Jesus took our sins on Himself, and with it came all the abuse such sinners deserve... He did not refuse it but humbly submitted to it

C. The Servant Speaks of His Vindication by God (vs. 7-9)

Isaiah 50:7-9 Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced.

Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.

He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up.

1. The ultimate end of the Suffering Servant is not disgrace but total vindication
2. The circumstances described plainly in verse 6 show an astonishing level of abuse which would have amounted to ABJECT DEGRADATION... how humiliating is it to be spat upon, to have your face smashed and your beard plucked out... to be stripped and have your back beaten
3. But the Servant refuses to be shamed... He is helped by His Father and will not be disgraced but finally vindicated in the end!!

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

“Despised” = thought very little of the shame!!!!

4. So He sets His face like flint and refuses to stop in His atoning work...
5. God totally vindicated Jesus by His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension into glory, and His being seated at the right hand of God the Father
6. At that place of infinite honor and glory, WHO WOULD DARE ACCUSE HIM? WHO WOULD DARE CONFRONT HIM? WHO WOULD DARE CONDEMN HIM?
7. Amazingly these are the very words Paul uses to speak of OUR vindication too, our freedom from condemnation

Romans 8:33-34 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more

than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

8. All of this honor and security comes from Christ's atonement and resurrection, and to us because we are IN CHRIST!!
9. His resurrection IS our vindication!!!

Romans 4:25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

To sum up verses 4-9, we have presented very clearly for the first time the SUFFERING SERVANT who is perfectly obedient to His Father and who knows the word to sustain the weary...

He listened to His Father to work a salvation for His people....

III. A Key Question: Will You Listen to the Servant or to Yourself? (vs. 10-11)

A. All Who Have Ears to Hear the Servant Will Lean on God (vs. 10)

Isaiah 50:10 Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

1. It all comes down to this: we are brought to this key decision... who are we going to listen to??
2. On the one hand, in verse 10, we have those who FEAR THE LORD and OBEY THE WORD OF HIS SERVANT
 - a. The "obey the word of His Servant" = listen to the words Jesus speaks to us from the Father
 - b. His words are life... they are salvation... and all who listen to those words by faith will be saved

Romans 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

John 6:45 It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.

3. If you are walking in the dark... if you have no light... you are LOST... you are IN SIN and need a Savior
4. If you KNOW THIS TO BE TRUE OF YOU, God has already worked a marvelous thing in your heart

5. Come out of darkness into the light of salvation

John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Colossians 1:13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves

B. All Who Try to Walk by their Own Light Will Be Tormented (vs. 11)

Isaiah 50:11 But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment.

1. The chapter ends with a warning to all those who are confident in their own light... confident in their own truth, their own inner thoughts and patterns... confident they know the truth and don't need Jesus or any other Savior to help them
2. God warns them to go ahead and walk by their own lights and follow their own ways... to live by their own set of values and to follow their own wisdom, their own ideas
3. God warns them that if they do, they will receive **TORMENT** from His hand... they will **LIE DOWN IN TORMENT**... final judgment for those who know best

IV. Applications

A. Be Very Careful How You Listen

Luke 8:18 Therefore consider carefully how you listen.

That was said after the parable of the seed and sower... 1) seed sown on path; 2) seed sown on rocky soil; 3) seed sown among the thorns; 4) seed sown on good soil

Luke 8:15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

What happens to the word of God that He sows in your life? How you do listen?

Are you like Israel:

Isaiah 6:9-10 "'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

Or do you take to heart the seed of the word and bring forth a harvest?

B. Thank God that Jesus Obeyed on Your Behalf!

Justification by faith... He listened and obeyed, suffered and died so that you could be counted righteous in Him

Delight in the security of justification that Jesus won

Know that His vindication is YOURS:

Romans 8:33-34 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Though we want to be as submissive and obedient as Jesus, we must do so knowing that God sees us IN CHRIST at every moment... His obedience has won for you a standing of perfect righteousness if you come to Christ

C. Quiet Times Like Jesus

Jesus' patterns are an example for us too

He never went a day without beginning with His Father... He awoke very early every day and went to a secluded place to meet with God

He went with a willing heart, an eager ear

He went to learn words from the Father... so He could then turn and give them to others

Isaiah 50:4 The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.

Do you do this? And when you hear God speak to you, do you listen with a willing

D. A Final Appeal to Come to Christ

Do not rely on your own wisdom, your own way of thinking!!

Flee the wrath to come and rest in Christ's sufferings for you!

Listen to the word of the Servant, Jesus, and find salvation in Him!

The sufferings of Christ described here in detail point to the truth of the gospel...

Matthew 26:67-68 Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him ⁶⁸ and said, "Prophesy to us, Christ. Who hit you?"

John 19:1-3 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face.

The fact that all of this was predicted seven centuries before Christ came should prove to you the truth of it... God is calling on you to forsake your own wisdom and trust in His Son!