

**September 13 2015 Year B Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Newport United Church of Christ**

Scripture Lessons ~

Psalm 116:1-9

James 3:5-12

Mark 7:31-37

Sermon *Got Your Ears On?*

My home church in Colfax is situated on a very busy main street which doubles as a state highway as well. And the sound system when I was growing up was unfortunately probably the least expensive available at the time and as a result it was not uncommon for us during the time of worship to pick up radio chatter from passing semi-trucks on Main Street. As you can imagine some of what we heard from these truckers was not quite as appropriate to the worship service for that day, but one thing that could be dependent upon was the conversations always began with these immortal words “Breaker, Beaker One-9-got your ears on.”-- meaning, can you hear me?

We could have done nicely without all that chatter in church but for the most part but not having your ears on that means not being able to hear. As many of you know not being able to hear is a very, very frustrating experience indeed both for the one speaking and also for the one listening. Thankfully for some the hearing problems can be helped by the use of hearing aids in one or both of those in our ears can be helpful. Like the hearing aids that Eddie Albert used to advertise on TV. Do you remember what it was called? The Miracle Ear! I think it is truly a miracle when hearing aids can help someone to hear who wasn't able to hear before. Now whether you are hard of hearing and need a hearing aid or not; the miracle of hearing is taking place in each one of us at this very moment this morning. It is a great miracle. It is a wonderful miracle and it is almost too good to believe. I know is not hearing you won a million dollars on the Publishing House sweepstakes or suddenly all of your troubles will be whisked away.

The miracle none other than God has done for each one of us today is great and wondrous nevertheless. In fact it is better far better than any of the minor miracles of winning a million dollars or having the last one of your problems swept away. For you are the object of the miracle of hearing this morning- hearing God that is! I don't mean to minimize that other miracle that the majority of us are gifted with- physical hearing because every time I see a model of the human ear and read about how the hearing system works, I am completely awestruck. Ordinary everyday hearing is a miracle. The ability to hear scores of music, to

listen to the splash of waves, to hear the whispers of the person who loves, is truly a wonderful thing.

But there is a far greater miracle, the miracle of hearing God's voice in your life. This is much more than that the physical hearing in fact that isn't even necessary at all for this other miracle. There are many who remain completely deaf and have somehow heard God speak to them. God has a way of getting through our limitations and speaking directly to our hearts, Think about Helen Keller, for example and the good news is that God has spoken to you and God has spoken to me. It is why we are here in worship today, I think, somehow, somewhere or someplace God has gotten through to us and we have responded, and we long to hear more, we want to give thanks to God in worship. We want to share ourselves with the world in return. Now it may well be you have not heard as clearly or as fully as you would like and I expect that many of us like me at times in my own life, we are not sure we have heard God's voice at all. We may have doubts; we may wonder about things, we even strain to hear what God might be saying to us. At times it maybe that seems God silent in our lives or what God might be saying doesn't quite makes a lot of sense to us. There is no question that our hearing is often weak and is often muddled during the course of life. But on the other hand isn't it still true that we have heard something from God, that still small voice of God that spoke to Elijah in First Kings, has also spoken to each one of us.

So we are the object of a miracle. Not far from the miracle that Jesus performed centuries, centuries ago on a dusty road near the Sea of Galilee when he made a deaf man hear. The miracle recorded in this story from Mark's Gospel was pretty similar to other miracles recorded in other gospels. A deaf man with a speaking impediment, he probably had because he couldn't hear, was brought to Jesus by some of his friends or perhaps some of his relatives. These friends or relatives asked Jesus "to lay hands upon" which was with usual personal way that Jesus had healed others. But Jesus does things a little bit differently this time. Instead of just touching the man and commanding him to be healed, which Jesus does in another place in Mark's Gospel for the person that was blind? He used his own spittle as a kind of ointment which to us might seem disgusting in our modern world; it was in keeping the belief in ancient times that spittle was some kind of medicine. After all people watched dogs and they licked their wounds, so after all why wouldn't our spittle be a kind of healing for any of us? I have heard that Safeway might carry spittle in bottles at the pharmacy. Is that true, Don? Is that a new development? I am just checking, I want to keep on top of all these things

In this way both Jesus' word and Jesus' touch opened the ears of that deaf man and it shows in that he could hear and that he could speak not unlike the miracle that God works in each one of us when our lives are so turned around by God that our hearing and speaking in a spiritual sense are never quite the same

again. You know many people are told the same miracle St. Augusta in his famous Confession shows how his life was completely changed when he truly heard the word of God for the every first time. For Augusta it came just a bit of the Bible and it suddenly came alive in a completely new way. In Martin Luther's story was one of a miracle appearing, too. In his study especially of the Psalms, Luther was given a new way of hearing the word-righteousness. He came to realize that righteousness was a gift of God's grace through faith and not a human achievement. These very things tell us of our own miracle as well, the miracles of our hearing, perhaps a single phrase spoke volumes to Augusta or Luther. I believe many of us can tell of a similar story may not so dramatically and may not so well but each one of us has heard, too.

There is another miracle that we need to pray as result of this passage as well. The second part of Jesus miracle in Mark 7, the miracle of speech, the miracle of being able to share with others what we have heard from God; the miracle of sharing God's love in a hurting world. God has graciously enabled us to hear a bit of the great story of love and of forgiveness that Jesus came to give. But others need to hear to hear that story, too. They need to hear it from us for too often we have heard, yet we have remained dumb, we have remained speechless, and we remained mute in the process. The Holy Spirit not only has helped us to hear with our ears but can also open our mouths to share the good news to others through our actions, through our word. The miracle witnessed by Mark is still happening and we, too, can say with those folks said that day he has done all things well. He even makes the deaf to hear makes the dumb to speak.

So the truck drivers question which echoes God's question remains for us this morning—have you got your ears on? Have you got your ears on? Together we say AMEN.