

Good morning, Horizon. Good morning. Definitely. The Holy Spirit is working in here today. The band sounded great. You know, you think about the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit, you know, comes to us by wind. And this flame, I think, was the temperature in the room.

I think it's maybe presenting itself as the flame today, but we're working on the air conditioner. So so bear with us. But we're glad you're here. And thanks for being a part of of of worship today. Thanks for coming and taking time to praise God.

And together as a as a family, as the body of Christ, it is good to be together. If this is your first time with us, we want to welcome you. We are glad that you are here today. You know, we don't know what the reason that brought you here today or what you're seeking or what you're hoping for. But we hope that you can find it here. This is a loving community where everyone is welcome to come as they are, and we are so excited to have you here. If you would like to start a conversation with us, you can text hello to the number on your screen.

4025125700. And this will help start a conversation with us and for us to get to know you and for you to get to know us. You know, last week I talked about texting and how texting is a really good tool for conversation.

But it's not it's not always the best tool. So if you are here with us in person today, we would love to have a conversation with you out in the atrium after the worship service. Also, conversations are important for all of us, whether we're new here or not, but especially if we're not right as part of this community, as this family of believers, we have conversations with one another. But it's also important for us to have conversations out in our community. And there is a really fun opportunity for you to have some conversations. We have a partnership here at Horizons with Zeeman Elementary School and they are having a block party and we are going to be helping with that. This gives a chance for teachers and parents to kind of step aside and be able to have a sense of community. And we get to have conversations with parents and teachers as well.

So it's a great opportunity. My husband, Tom and I, we've signed up. We are going to be helping with the duck races. My husband said that he really hopes they're their real life ducks. Don't tell him that is probably not the case.

But anyway, if you would like to help with that, you can go to Horizons, Dot Church and click on events and then you'll see the block party and there's other fun games that you can help with as well.

The conversations are important and they're very common, right? Almost as common as the air we breathe. We are having conversations all of the time, sometimes in casual ways, saying hello and goodbye and thank you and you're welcome.

We have conversations that are deeper or we have conversations with one another to gain information and build relationships. Sometimes we have difficult conversations with people that we maybe disagree with. Well, in our first weekend of our sermon series, The Conversationalist last week, we talked about the importance of using our words in our conversations to build up others. Now, I had several people after message last week say that they could really relate to the scripture that we talked about of just

using those words, all of our words, to encourage one another. And someone told me that they have you know, sometimes they seem to always say the negative thing to their kids.

I could certainly relate to that. Sometimes I just pick out the negative things instead of encouraging them. And somebody else told me that they you know, it was a good reminder for them when they speak to their spouse of how sometimes their words aren't encouraging.

And I can definitely relate to that, too. I do that as well. So the truth is we probably all needed that reminder to speak words of encouragement to one another. But the saying goes that we were given two ears and one mouth for a reason, and that's because the other side of having a conversation, the listening part is so important and we should be listening twice as much right as we as we are speaking. Well, of course, listening and hearing, they're kind of two different things. Like often times will be in a conversation and will say to someone like, Are you even listen?

They need to me and they'll repeat the last couple of words, you know, how that goes. And and they may have heard what you said, but they are not always listening. Our attention spans are shorter. Now, research as is showing that because of of all of the things that we are stimulated with, we have a short attention

span sometimes that makes listening hard, but we often fill our lives with noises, right? Things that we're listening to in the background videos and and shows and music or conversations. And sometimes that makes it really hard for us to focus on what is important, to listen to what is important.

The Bible has quite a bit to teach us about listening, and here's a confession. I am foolish and disgraceful. And I say that because of this Bible verse found in Proverbs, and it says, Those who answer before they listen are foolish and disgraceful.

Now, I could give you a lot of examples of this, but I do have a story for you of how something that happened to me several, several months ago and something happened because I didn't listen. Now, I need you to know that that I am a rule follower like I am.

I'm a right and wrong kind of person right there that my underlying part of me is that I want to be a good person. Okay. So several weeks, several months ago, this is at my last appointment and my last church.

After a worship service, somebody came up to me and she was telling me about a devotional book that she was using and something in my message had triggered her. And she was really excited and she wanted to share with me about this devotional that she was using.

And I was I was actively listening. Like, this was the good part, right? I was in the conversation. I was truly excited about this devotional she was talking about. She was she was explaining it to me and and I said Jenn genuinely to her that I would love to check that out sometime.

So a few weeks later it's almost time for service to start. So worship is just about starting. Someone else had given me something, so I went back to the office to put it in my office and I was coming around the corner heading to worship because it was about to start.

And I come around the corner and this woman that was telling me about her devotional, she was kind of come around the corner too, and she's like, Oh, good, I was looking for you, she said. And and she had this devotional book and she's like, I have this for you.

And, and so I took it from her hands or she gave it to me. I don't know. Right. But but it's in my hands. Right. And just then also my husband came up and so he it was kind of a we all came from three different ways.

And so oh, hi, Tom. Right. So anyway, so I have this devotional book and I'm kind of flipping through it, right? I'm flipping through the devotional book and it looks awesome. It's like a really good devotional book, had the Bible passage and questions and I was I was excited about it.

I was very excited about it. I was like, oh, my goodness. Like my husband and I were just talking about yesterday how we needed a new devotional book. I said the one we were using, it was it was kind of long and complicated and it just wasn't working for us.

So I'm like, Thank you so much. Like, I am so excited about this. And so, you know, we're should be starting something like Thank you again. And so I take the book and my husband, I, we go and we sit down in the front row and so we sit down and, you know, right, right before

I put the book down, I kind of flipped through it one more time because I'm excited about it and I like, put it down and I'm like, I think I just stop pencil writing in this book. And I thought.

Did she bring her devotional book for me to see and just to look at? Or did she bring this devotional book to give to me? And so I sat her down and I was like, okay, after worship, I need to find her, right?

I need to find her and ask her and clarify. Clarify. And so after the service, she was nowhere to be found. And so I went home and I was like, okay, Tom, Tom, you saw this whole incident play out, right?

Did I just steal her devotional book? And he got he thought for a second, he's like, no, no, no, I don't think you did. And I said, Do you think I didn't because you heard her say, I'm giving this to you or because I was so excited to receive it?

And he was like, Ooh, I don't know about that. So I emailed her and I was like, Hey, thanks for bringing that book in, like. But, but be honest with me. Like, did I steal your book? And so she responded with something like, well, I wasn't clear with you.

And you were so excited about it. Consider it a gift. In other words, I stole her book. I stole her book that she was using every day because I didn't take time to listen to her. And we laughed about it the next weekend and she was so gracious with me.

But lesson learned, right? So, okay. So a few weeks later, Pastor Jason had learned that he was leaving Horizons. And I learned that I was coming to Horizons. And so Pastor Jason and I were going to meet for a conversation.

And so he walked up and he has a book and he's like, hey, you know, this book really meant a lot to me. And so he sends it to me and I'm like, holding it like this. Like, it was, like, really fragile or like it was going to detonate or something if.

And he's like, yeah, it was really meaningful and he's talking about it. And so then I'm like, Okay, did you bring this book to show it to me? Are you letting me borrow this book and I'm supposed to return it?

Or is this mine to keep? And he kind of looks at me. He's like, No, like I wrote in, it's like two to you. I'm like, Oh, okay, good. Because a couple of weeks ago I stole someone's book.

And anyway, we laughed about that. But the point is, is listening is really important, right? We do it all the time. We hear what we think we want to hear or we when we listen, we're listening to get ready to respond instead of actually here hearing what is being said to us.

Now, there's lots of examples of Jesus, how Jesus listens and how we should mimic what he does. Think about Mary and Martha. You know, a time where Martha is busy in the kitchen, and it's not that she was doing anything wrong, but in that moment, Mary was at Jesus's feet listening and and Jesus points out how important that was in that moment. And we think about Jesus with the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman. And he really listens to her and he hears what she's saying. And she even he even here's what she's not saying.

And she ends up going to share of the good news of Jesus after that. So Jesus uses all sorts of examples. He doesn't just listen to the words, but by emotions and other things as well. So we're going to read a mark Chapter ten verses 46 through 52.

Now, this is the healing of blind Artemis is. Starting to verse 46, Jesus and his followers came into Jericho as Jesus was leaving Jericho together with his disciples and a sizable crowd. A blind beggar named Bartomeu's to Marcus's son was sitting beside the road.

When he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was there. He began to shout. Jesus, son of David, show me mercy. Many scolded him, telling him to be quiet. But he shouted even louder, Son of David, show me mercy. Jesus stopped and said, Call him forward.

They called the blind man, saying to him, Be encouraged. Get up. He's calling you. Throwing his cloak to the side. The man jumped up and came to Jesus and Jesus asked him, What do you want me to do for you?

The blind man said, Teacher, I want to see. Jesus said, Go. Your faith has healed you. At once he was able to see and he began to follow Jesus on the way. I want you to imagine this scene for a moment.

So it's Jesus and his followers and a sizable crowd. So it was probably noisy, right? They were walking along. There would have been many beggars along the side of the road and as soon as borrowed part of me was heard that it was Jesus, he started to shout and people were scolding him.

They're like, be quiet. Like, don't bother, Jesus, like, be quiet. But Jesus listened. He heard him and then he wanted to know more. And so Jesus called him over and Bartomeu's came and Jesus asked him a question.

And sometimes the best listening happens when we ask the right question and then stop talking. And you know, our friends, our kids, our spouses, our neighbors, our coworkers, there's people in our lives who are probably trying to get our attention as we're walking by.

And sometimes we don't stop and sometimes we don't stop and even ask a question. But that's important. This is what Jesus is doing in this situation. If we're going to be us, we're going to have if

we're going to get a more just and loving world as God intends, we have to stop and we have to listen. And we have to ask questions. And we have to hear the needs of others. So James Chapter one verses 19 and 21 says. Know this, my dear brothers and sisters, everyone should be quick to listen. Slow to speak and slow to grow angry.

This is because an angry person doesn't produce God's righteousness. Therefore, with humility, set aside all moral filth and wrath of wickedness and welcome the world. The word planted deep inside you, the very word that is able to save you.

So I love this passage for a lot of reasons. Right? Is it okay to be angry? Yes, but we need to be slow to be angry. Is it okay to speak? Of course. But we need to be slow to speak.

But we need to be really quick to listen. Now, there is something happening in our city, in the city of Lincoln, in Lancaster County that's really exciting. And our conference that we're part of, the Great Plains Conference that Horizon's church is part of has is investing in this in this opportunity, because we know that the city isn't perfect. Perfect. Right. We know that there are is need in this city. And they're working with this organization called the Dart Center. And the Dart Center is a great organization. And the steering team the steering team is the elected leaders of this church community.

They're meeting with this DART organization next week. And I'm excited about it. Whether we we we decide that this is the next great thing for Horizons or not. What I love about the DART organization is how they go about making change.

Now, they first thing that they do is that they listen. So on their website. I think we have a picture of it. So this is this is just I just stole this from their website and they said, we believe can make communities ought to deter to determine their own futures.

We bring this belief to life by training community leaders and professional organizers to build power and take direct action on problems facing their communities. And then very first thing is, we listen deeply to their community for what they are struggling with and what their vision is for the future.

Right. And then they move on to research and then they take action. So also you'll be hearing more about this either as if Horizon's decides to join in this or you'll just be hearing about it in the city.

But it's really important that we listen first, because sometimes we jump to do judging. Sometimes we we speak before we know the situation. Sometimes we get so angry. But yet this is really important. So why should we listen? Like, what are the reasons that we should listen? First of all, we should listen to build up others. Right. We listen to our loved ones. We listen to our to strangers. We listen to those who we disagree with.

And when we do that, when we listen to what's really going on in the people around us, it helps us to say those encouraging words that we were talking about last week. So we two we listen to in order to share the gospel message in a language that others understand, everyone is going to hear the gospel message in a different way. The good news of Jesus is going to come to people in different ways. Now, that language, whatever that language is, we might be able to learn if we listen, if we listen to somebody who struggles about life or struggles with the church or struggles with their faith.

When we really understand that where people are coming from, then we are better equipped to share the hope and the love of Jesus. So the third reason we should listen is we listen to to gain wisdom and advice from others.

Proverbs 12:15 says Fools see their own way is right, but the wise listen to advice. Now, being an independent person, sometimes I think I can do it on my own or I can figure it out. There are so many wise people around me.

When I take time to listen and learn from them, it does make a difference in my life, right? In my spiritual life, in my family life as a leader. It helps in all of these ways. Now, the fourth reason that we should listen is because that sometimes God is speaking to us and sometimes the noise of the world gets in the way and we don't hear what God is trying to tell us. And sometimes we do hear right. And sometimes these are difficult things for us to do. And so we just pretend like we don't hear God.

I've been there for sure. Proverbs five. Is that. Is that right? I think I got oh three, six or seven. It says that listen to for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go, he's the one that will keep you on track.

Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God. Run from evil. Listen for God's voice. We don't do that enough for sure. Now, the fifth reason that we should listen doesn't really follow in this category, because I'm going to say that sometimes we shouldn't listen.

If someone is not speaking love to you, then they are not connected with God at that moment. If someone is being harmful or hurtful to you with their words, it's okay not to listen to them. It's okay to walk away from them.

It's okay to set boundaries in our lives of who we are going to listen to in this world and who we are not going to listen to. Now let's go back to that story of Thomas and Barton Masters in the crowd.

And he calls out for Jesus and Jesus stops what he's doing. And he turns and he listens. He listens to Thomas's need. And we don't cry out for it, for Jesus, probably as much as we should. But Jesus is ready to listen when we are ready to speak to him.

And Jesus isn't, you know, this genie in the bottle. It's not that we just cry out for what we think we need, and Jesus gives it to us. But He's actually listening to more than just our words.

He sees us. He knows our needs. He knows what we want. And he will provide for us. So much, so much can happen when we take time to listen to others, when we take time to listen. The kind of listening that Jesus does.

Listening can help us. Save lives. We can be life changers better when we listen. Listening more than just hearing I'm talking about really listening is a tool that God has gifted us. And listening can create better relationships with God with those closest to us, with our community.

And today, we. We can make a difference in the lives of others, simply. I was sitting. Would you pray with me? Gracious God or father or creator or redeemer. Open our ears. Open our ears to hear the word that you have for us.

Whether that be a comforting word that we need in our lives today, whether that be a word of encouragement. Maybe it's a word of courage for us to do something that we are not courageous.

Courageous enough to do. And God, as we hear you, as we hear your voices, we hear what you are asking us to do. Help us to open our ears to what is happening in the world around us. Because it's easy for us to kind of put on our blinders, to put in our headphones and listen to whatever our soundtrack of our own life is. But God, you are. You want us to live in this community where we go to two schools like Zeman, and we listen to parents and we listen to kids and we listen to teachers and we hear what the needs are in our community.

Because then that's how we know how to react. That's how we know when it's time to get angry about something that's unjust in our world. That's when we know what our next step is. So God help us, guide us, lead us, encourage us, and just allow us to listen to what's around us.

We say this all in Jesus name. Amen.