

1. When people realize they're not going to see their loved ones again they often find themselves longing to say all the important things they never said over the years gone by. It becomes really important for them. It doesn't seem to matter if it's a hard word for people to hear and receive – *because the most important things just need to be stated plainly.*

I'm not talking about when your loved ones are heading off on an extended holiday – but even then you want people to know how much you love them...in-case something happens.

What kind of things would you want your loved ones to really know and understand if it was your last chance to speak with them? What's the most important thing you'd tell them?

I bet you're not thinking about the weather or the state of origin!

Wouldn't you put all your cards on the table, speak from the heart and tell them what really matters to you the most? What would that be - I wonder what you'd say...

2. Poor old Moses was faced with this situation in Deuteronomy.

Maybe you remember that God told Moses that he wouldn't be leading God's people into the Promised Land – and what a massive blow that would have been!

He had to say good-bye to the people he loved so dearly; people he got frustrated with as they travelled towards the land God has promised Israel's ancestors. He had to say farewell to the people he interceded for - standing between them and God and praying for their deliverance with courage and perseverance in difficult situations. And now he had to say good-bye. What was he going to say to these people – his people – his family? What he said mattered because they mattered to him!

So God breathed important words into Moses who said, ⁴ **Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.** ⁵ **Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.** ⁶ **These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.** ⁷ **Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.** ⁸ **Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.** ⁹ **Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.** ¹

"Hear!" שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל (Hear O Israel!) is the way Moses began his farewells. Maybe you recall reading the words of one even greater than Moses (Jesus), who often said, **"He who has ears, let him hear"** (Mt 13:9).

How do we interpret someone telling us to "hear something"? When Moses said "shema – hear" the Hebrew people understood that to mean "HEARING, LISTENING, UNDERSTANDING/ COMPREHENDING and OBEYING" – all in one word. When Jesus says, **"He who has ears, let him hear"** – it means the same thing.

Moses' words today make it clear that real hearing is never superficial. Real hearing always puts what is heard into practice.

Jesus put it this way:

²⁴ **"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.** ²⁵ **The rain came down, the streams rose, and**

¹ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. 1996 (electronic ed.) (Dt 6:4–9). Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI

the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”²

We don't want to be fools building on sand do we?

We don't want to be people who hear from God himself – and then say,
“okay I've heard these amazing truths of God but I'm not going to inwardly digest it, really listen with my heart; I'm not going to bother understanding and comprehending those things that challenge me or look too hard. And obey? That's legalism! We're Lutherans who live by grace...”

Yes we live by the grace of God, but that doesn't mean we don't strive DAILY to live holy lives, to delight in living according to God's will and walking in His ways. That's exactly what we said we'd commit to in our prayer of confession today. We're called to live the faith we profess with our lips. That's walking with integrity.

The other side of hearing from God and acting on it - is knowing where your help comes from when things do come crashing down around you.

Knowing that Jesus is right with you ready to speak those sweet words of forgiveness and comfort right into the situation you find yourself in.

The hearing I'm taking about is hearing the word of Jesus that comes from outside of you (not within yourself). The word that goes to work **on us and in us**, affecting our whole being - not just with information, but applying that forgiveness and comfort personally and practically in your life.

That's what it means to live by grace. Living by grace means behaving as you believe and receiving God's forgiving and comforting word - daily. It means that we are hearers of God's word who then put them into practice like Jesus said – being wise and building upon a rock solid foundation.

3. Hear O people of God @ Trinity Lutheran church today. The Lord our God the Lord is one! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. That's where Moses started his good-byes.

But this word **isn't** asking you to do anything. **It is** God telling you something about himself. It's God saying I am the only God – one God. You have choices in the world about whether you buy a ford or a holden or a Toyota. There are options whether you brush your teeth with Colgate, Macleans or cruelty free toothpaste – that's up to you. **But there is only One God!**

Anything else is a sad second best to number One - An idol made by human hands that really doesn't deserve our attention yet alone our worship. God is One – He is the One true God robed in glory and majesty - and He knows it!

The second thing God is telling you about himself is that He is your God. Did you hear it? **“The LORD our God...”** Even without you choosing Him, God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) says that He will be your God and you will be His people. He initiates the relationship. He puts himself out there so to speak where we can turn around and reject him – but God says,

² *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. 1996 (electronic ed.) (Mt 7:24–27). Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI

- I will be your God.
- I will look after you.
- I'll give you everything you need to walk with me.
- I'll protect you, nurture you and make sure that ultimately you're okay regardless of your circumstances.
- I won't leave you when you're alone, when you're hurting or dying.

In fact I'll take all the hurt, all the rejection, all of the tears and sickness, I'll take all of the anger; and carry all your burdens and sin and shame...to the cross.

I'll do it because I'm your God –and you're my people. And I love you. **Hear O Israel the Lord our God, the Lord is one.**

4. When it's time for Moses to say good-bye, he begins with the most important thing.

With the One true God who from the beginning puts Himself out there and says I will be your God – with all the countless blessings that entails.

God has been telling people this good news from the very beginning. He never stops telling us.

Which begs the question of us:

Why is it so many people wait until the end to share their faith in Jesus? Why on Earth would we not passionately share this with all our heart, soul and strength before trouble strikes in life or we're facing death? It is the most important thing!

Are we afraid of offending people? Are we ashamed of the message? What are the barriers stopping us from keeping our faith in Jesus at the centre of our lives and the lives of our families and friends?

- It's sad that so many Christians are scared to talk about Jesus or pray on the spot for a friend in need.
- It's so sad when households spend their time yelling at each other instead of speaking words of blessing into each other's lives.
- It's sad when Christians are so unsure of themselves, or worried what others will think of their prayers - and so they miss out on the ministry God has given them.

We're called to a much richer faith life than this...Hear the Word of the Lord:

⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. ³

That's a picture of some pretty serious Faith sharing isn't it?

Is it time for us to raise the bar? Is this an opportunity to grow, to be stretched a little bit? Imagine the blessings of being a part of a family and a church family where:

- We connect in meaningful ways sharing our faith together,
- Where active listening takes place,
- Where the word is central to our lives,
- Where parents, children, friends, couples and small groups all pray for each other as soon as a need is identified,

³ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. 1996 (electronic ed.) (Dt 6:4–9). Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI

- Where we speak words of blessing over each other,
- **After all we are the body of Christ!**

You are part of this kind of community. This kind of thing is happening amongst us – I've seen it. But there will also be people here who want to take the next step. Who want to grow in their faith journey. People who want to make a fresh start and be stretched a little bit too. Here is your opportunity!

As Head to the Heart kicks off tomorrow (confirmation ministry), let's start to connect again in meaningful ways – here @ Trinity and in our homes.

I'm inviting absolutely everyone to be intentional about sharing "**the most important thing**" while it is still today!

5. Have you heard of the FAITH 5 (faith acts in the home)?

SHARE, READ, TALK, PRAY, BLESS (repeat). This is one way that families can impress the things of God upon their children and live out the promises they made when they brought their kids to be baptized. It's an opportunity to make Jesus the centre of your life together.

Grandparents can do the same with their grandchildren. Friends and small groups can talk about the most important things whenever they gather together.

Mentors can mentor using the faith 5. Boyfriends and girlfriends, couples, married couples can all share the faith 5 together and be blessed richly through it.

I'm going to use it whenever I meet with all the leaders you elected at the last AGM.

We're going to share Highs and lows - the good and bad things about our day. We're going to read a few verses of scripture and then talk briefly about how that word speaks to our highs and lows.

We're going to pray for each other (just simple one sentence prayers) and then bless one another.

That's it. Five minutes or thirty minutes – you decide how long and how deep you go with it. But let's make a start!

Share Read Talk Pray Bless. It's for all of you here today. It's about hearing the word of God like the Hebrew people heard Moses. Hearing, listening, inwardly digesting, understanding and then obeying – walking in the faith we profess.

- Faith in the One who introduces himself as the LORD our God.
- The One and only God – who comes second to none.
- who continually opens up His word to nurture and sustain your faith.
- Who went to the cross for you – because He is your God.
- Who speaks words of blessing and forgiveness into your life.

Today let's let Jesus have the last word...and hear Him how he intends us to...

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

I reckon that's worth sharing with my loved ones. Do you? Amen.