



Sermon Series: More Than a Sidekick: Serving Alongside Others

To be used with Session 6: Baruch

Sermon Title Possibilities: "Simon Says"; "Lead by Listening"; "Speak Truth to Power"

Scripture: Jeremiah 36:4-8,16-18; 45:1-5

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study, "More Than a Sidekick: Serving Alongside Others", this sermon will reinforce to the congregation the importance of listening to God and following God's instructions. The audience will examine the life of Baruch and will learn how he faithfully served Jeremiah by listening and notating the details of the prophecies that Jeremiah received from God. Additionally, the congregation will discover how Baruch's proficiency caused Jeremiah to trust him to speak on his behalf. The congregation will also learn that Godly leadership requires us to speak God's truth to power at all times. Ultimately, through this sermon, listeners will be challenged to prioritize time to hear from God and to speak the truth of God's Word despite any potential backlash.

Introduction: Do you remember the game "Simon Says"? The game is simple: one person assumes the role of Simon, speaks instructions with the preface, "Simon says," and the other participants must follow Simon's instructions. The participants must listen carefully to hear Simon and must obey Simon's commands. The key to this game has nothing to do with body makeup, athleticism, dexterity, or intellect; Simon Says is about listening skills. Plainly, if one wants to win in Simon Says, he or she must listen carefully and respond expeditiously and efficiently. Every day, we attempt to succeed in the game called life. However, listening to and following God's instructions is essential. Listening to God's instructions will give us the directions we need to succeed in life. Additionally, obeying God's instructions positions us to receive greater responsibilities from God. In today's sermon, we will look at the life of a significant character in biblical history and examine how he faithfully listened to God and was subsequently used to boldly speak the words of God.

1. Represent Well (Jeremiah 36:4-8)

According to verses 1-3, God spoke to Jeremiah prophetically concerning the things intended to happen to Judah for their disobedience. We must never forget that sharing intimacy with God and receiving instruction from God is a privilege we all must cherish. We also must note that although God chose to speak directly to Jeremiah in our text, God also desires to speak to us intimately. Jeremiah 36:4 reports that Jeremiah called

for Baruch, and Baruch immediately arrived and notated the prophecy that Jeremiah received from God. This one verse highlights a few remarkable traits that Baruch exhibited that should be modeled by every servant-leader: he was positioned in the proper place, he was prepared, and he was proficient. Notice that the author never mentioned that Jeremiah wrote anything down. Therefore, Jeremiah's retention of the prophecy was significantly contingent upon Baruch's dependability. We who serve must ask ourselves today, "Are we that dependable to those we serve?" If not, we harm and hinder our families, teams, and ministries. Another thing worth noting is Jeremiah's second instruction to Baruch: go and read the words from the scroll you have notated (Jer.36:6). This instruction should not be overlooked. It appears that Baruch proved himself faithful enough to be Jeremiah's spokesperson. From this, we must learn that those who fail to listen to God and document what God has spoken faithfully can never expect to be trusted to speak on behalf of God. Plainly, Baruch's life reminds us that God honors and rewards faithfulness.

2. Respond In Truth (Jeremiah 36:16-18)

Jeremiah 36 reports that Baruch faithfully fulfilled his assignment to read from the scroll the words spoken by God and dictated to him by Jeremiah. According to verse 16, the people were alarmed by the words that Baruch obediently read. In fact, some even questioned the validity of Baruch's words. Baruch's obedience reminds us that speaking the truth is costly and, in many cases, can be extremely dangerous. Baruch's obedient actions quite possibly put him in a seriously precarious situation. If word got back to the king that someone was speaking ill of him and his kingdom, that person could be subject to severe punishment, possibly even execution. Scripture is evident in that obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22); however, we can agree that sometimes obedience IS the sacrifice. Baruch's truth-telling was costly, just like most, if not all, of the assignments God calls us. Undeniably, countless scriptures command us to speak the truth and to put away deceit, falsehood, and lies. In fact, we are specifically commanded to "cry aloud, and spare not" (Isa. 58:1). Yet, this text reminds us that truth is not always initially embraced; some deny truth, reject truth, question truth, and some may even negatively retaliate in response to the truth. However, just like Baruch, we are called to speak God's truth no matter the retaliation because the truth will make you free (John 8:32). We can rest assured knowing that God will protect us just like God protected Baruch, when we faithfully speak truth.

3. Receive Your Reward (Jeremiah 45:1-5)

Jeremiah 45 details a vulnerable occurrence familiar to many servant-leaders today. According to our text, Baruch—the faithful scribe of Jeremiah, apparently experienced a breaking moment of frustration. Anyone who has faithfully served God and God's people will admit that doing so can sometimes bring immense frustration, doubt, and regret. In fact, one might argue that you have not fully surrendered to God until you have experienced a breaking point. Fortunately, we serve a God who welcomes our

emotions—no matter how big or ugly they seem. God welcomes our sadness, fear, and anger. In fact, we are given clearance to be angry as long as we do not sin (Eph.4:26). Moreover, scripture invites us to cast all of our cares on God because God cares for us and will sustain us (1 Pet. 5:7, Ps. 55:22). It appears that Baruch took full advantage of that invitation. According to Jeremiah 45:2, Baruch said, “Woe is me! The Lord has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest.” Perhaps in that low moment, Baruch felt alone and unheard, and his faithfulness was in vain. However, the word spoken to Baruch was that even amidst abounding disaster, God was going to give him his life as a prize of war in every place to which he went (Jer. 45:5). Here, God promised to reward Baruch with one of the greatest gifts: grace. God’s promise to Baruch confirms a few things: first, God will reward our faithfulness, and second, God’s reward will always exceed our expectations. No wonder the Ephesian writer declared, “Now unto to Him that able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all we can ever ask or think” (Eph. 3:20).

Conclusion: Listening is essential for every relationship. We will only be great team members if we develop excellent listening skills. The same is true with our relationship with God. God speaks to us every day, offering us insight, guidance, and warnings. However, it is up to us to prioritize listening to God. The more we listen to God, the better we position ourselves to succeed daily. We learned today that God remembers how well we listen and rewards those who listen. As we conclude today, we must assess our lives honestly, determine how well we prioritize listening and responding to God, and commit ourselves to enhance that vital trait of Christian discipleship.

Author Bio

Dr. TERRENCE CHANDLER-HARRISON serves as the Lead Pastor of The Liberty Church—Clarksville, TN. He is a graduate of Morehouse College and Vanderbilt University Divinity School. Terrence earned a Doctorate of Education from The University of Southern California and his research was awarded the dissertation of distinction merit. He is a professor of Bible and Theology and Dean at The Historic American Baptist College—Nashville, TN. Terrence and his wife Anjelica are the proud parents of Ellie Grace and Timothy James. Check out Terrence’s latest work, *Spiritual Cross Training: The Book of James* on Amazon and Barnes and Noble.