

Thursday, January 18

There is an experiment that demonstrates how our brain works and is conditioned to recognize certain stimuli. One person stands in the middle of two other people and listens while the people on each side read from a book. One person reading would insert the middle person's name into the reading about every 20 words. After the reading the middle person was asked, "Did you hear anything unusual?" Not only did the person hear his name, but he knew how many times his name was said!

When many voices compete for our attention, how do we hear the voice of God? How does God most effectively speak to you? Through scripture reading? Through prayer? Through worship? Through music? What conditions are most conducive to your hearing God? Meditate on these questions and write your thoughts here.

Friday, January 19

Part of being able to hear God's voice among the din of many other voices is knowing the nature of God's message to us. Just as we recognize the voice of another person not only by the sound of his or her voice but through the phrases that person uses, we can identify God's voice by the content of God's message to us. A message of love and affirmation. A voice that sends us forth into the world with a message of forgiveness and acceptance.

While we should look for conditions that are conducive to hearing God's message, we should also hear God's message as consistent with scripture, the community of faith, and our experience of God. Thanks be to God who loves us and sends us forth with a message of grace, love and power!

Message Notes – January 14, 2024

A Very Good Sign *

- I. Baptism is first and primarily about _____.
 - A. A moment in which we recognize God's _____.
 1. A moment when we recognize God's _____.
 2. A moment in which we recognize God's _____.
 - B. "You are my Son, the _____; with you I am well pleased."
 - A. You might have recognized that that this heavenly affirmation that falls upon Jesus didn't end with "_____."
 - B. The statement doesn't end, "If you do my _____" or "If you give up your _____ on a _____."
 - C. No, God _____ to Jesus, "You're my son, I love you and I am pleased with you."
 - D. God's affirmation of Jesus is the very definition of God's _____.
 1. Grace is God's unmerited _____ for us.
 2. We do nothing to _____ this love from God
- II. Baptism is also about those who receive God's _____.
 - A. It's about ____; it's about you and it's about me.
 - B. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said that the sacraments are the _____ sign of an _____ reality.

* Matthew 3:13-17 and Romans 5:1-5

- C. It is a moment that involves God’s grace and our _____.
- III. Baptism then, is about _____ for God.
- A. Radios blare at us in our cars, stereo and TVs squawk at us in our homes, elevators sing us at work and _____ generates “voices” nag us about empty gas tanks or a door is ajar.
 - B. Baptism should be a moment in which we will listen to _____ voice above all other voices.
 - 1. It is a moment when we turn from _____ to God’s ways and recognize our ability to do so.
 - 2. It is a moment when we accept the _____ of the community of believers as we enter that community.
 - 3. It is a moment in which God says “_____” to us! A voice from heaven said, “This is my Son. This is my daughter. You are my child, I love you and I’m pleased with you.”
 - C. It’s about God saying _____ to us and all of us saying _____ to God.

Daily Meditations and Study Guide

The following is a daily meditation and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, January 15

What memories do you have of baptisms? Perhaps you remember your own baptism or a baptism you witnessed that

was particularly moving. What made that sacrament so memorable? Was it the setting? Was it the people involved in the baptism? Meditate upon your memories and write your thoughts here.

Tuesday, January 16

Baptism is truly God’s moment. It is a moment in which we recognize God’s love: A moment when we recognize God’s favor. A moment in which we recognize God’s direction for our lives. Baptism is an affirmation of our faith – as parents and a congregation. Baptism recognizes the affirmation we receive from our faith community.

During the ritual of Baptism, we pay a great deal of attention to many details from the clothes we wear to the details of where we will stand, the responses we read and the music we sing. We don’t want to miss the fact that baptism is primarily about God and our relationship with God. Think about the memorable baptisms from yesterday. How did God fit into your memories? Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s presence in our rituals and in our lives!

Wednesday, January 17

Baptism is about receiving God’s affirmation; to hear God’s voice lifting us up and sending us forth. Yet there are many voices that compete for our attention, time and resources. When you are trying to listen for the voice of God, what competing voices do you hear? What distracts you from your relationship with God? Pray for the ability to hear God’s voice above others! Write your reflections here.