

Thursday, January 16

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 17

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, 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 12, 2025

The Voice of Truth *

- I. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said that the sacraments are the outward sign of an inward _____.
 - A. Most of us are aware of the actions of the sacraments – what we actually see and observe – but are we aware of the _____ reality of those actions?
 - B. It is a moment that involved God's _____ and our response.
 - C. Baptism is truly _____ moment.
 1. A moment in which we recognize God's _____.
 2. A moment when we recognize God's _____.
 3. A moment in which we recognize God's _____ for our lives.
- II. We are bombarded today by disembodied _____ and background _____.
 - 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. While we routinely live with all this noise, we remain highly susceptible to the _____ shouted by these various voices.

* Matthew 3:13-17 and Isaiah 42:1-9

- C. Baptism should be a moment in which we will listen to _____ voice above all other voices.
- D. It is a moment when we turn from _____ to God's ways and recognize our ability to do so.
- E. It is a moment when we accept the _____ of the community of believers as we enter that community.

III. Baptism is also recognition of _____ and the fact that the community is expanding and that we are supportive within our community, helping new members of our community and nurturing them in their _____.

- A. The problem is when we try to hear the voice of God – Why isn't god's voice more discernible than all those other _____ sounds?
- B. Perhaps our problem is that we only listen to voices that sound like _____.
- C. The question for us today is, "Are we _____?"
- D. At this moment of new beginnings we should listen for _____ voice introducing us personally to the Father for the first time

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 13

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 14

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 15

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? Write your thoughts here and pray for the ability to hear God's voice above others!