

Thursday, January 14

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? Can you hear God calling your name? Meditate on these questions and write your thoughts here.

Friday, January 15

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 we proclaim as able to accomplish abundantly far more than we can ask or imagine and who loves us, sending us forth with a message of grace, love and power!

Message Notes – January 10, 2021

*Doxology – We Are God's Beloved**

- I. Doxology is a literary device in ancient writings offering a majestic declaration of _____ to God.
 - A. We find doxologies sprinkled throughout our _____.
 1. Paul ends our passage for today with a doxology: "Now to him who by the power at work within us is _____ to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Ephesians 3:20-21)
 2. A challenge: As we begin this New Year, to _____ these two verses.
 - B. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said that the sacraments are the outward sign of an inward _____.
 - 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

* Matthew 13:13-17 and Acts 10:34-43

remain highly susceptible to the _____
shouted by these various voices.

C. Baptism should be a moment in which we will listen
to _____ voice above all other voices.

- III. Baptism is also recognition of _____.
- 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 _____.
- IV. The question for us today is, "Are we _____?"
- A. It is time to rediscover and recover the biblical
tradition of _____.
- B. After we have listened for the voice of God, we are
then called to _____.
- C. I see two _____ doxologies at work.
1. We praise God by proclaiming, "Now to him
who by the power at work within us is _____
to accomplish abundantly far more than all we
can ask or imagine.
 2. In return God, that voice from heaven,
proclaims, "This is my Son, – my daughter, my
child – the _____, with whom I am well
pleased."
- D. Baptism is a _____ moment – a
commissioning moment

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 11

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 12

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 13

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!