

Hyde Park Presbyterian Church
Lent Worship Study – “Sensing the Gospel”
March 26, 2017

“Hear”

Scripture Readings: **John 5:25-29, Romans 10:14-17, Psalm 62**

This sermon series and study during Lent will follow worship sermon series “Sensing the Gospel.”

Even today, we encounter God and God’s salvation in embodied ways -- in our bodies’ abilities to perceive familiar realities and to interpret new ones. Lent provides opportunities to acknowledge this. The season begins with smelly and greasy ash as a stark liturgical reminder of our flesh’s dusty finitude. It will end with our feet washed in cool water or a bittersweet taste of wine in our mouths as we imagine the horrible sight of a man’s body mangled on a cross. In between, Lent allows us to consider together who we are and how we encounter an incarnate God.

This study is meant to supplement the Sunday morning worship sermon and provide a deeper look into the scriptures from Sunday.

Being roused from sleep is almost always a startling experience. A familiar sound -- a regular alarm chime, the bark of the neighbor’s dog, a family member speaking your name -- makes the experience easier on the body. By contrast, shattered glass or a scream in the night starts the adrenaline flowing. Discipleship involves learning to find familiarity in God’s words, so we respond rightly. Such familiarity creates a kind of harmonious resonance, the result of growing into greater intimacy with God. It does not mean a dismissive attitude toward the divine voice as something tame and predictable.

Discuss what noises in your life will cause emotional reactions? Alarms, sirens, phone ring, etc...

Read: John 5:25-29

The hearing (*akouo*) Jesus refers to obviously requires more than having been present when he spoke or simply reading his words in Scripture now. The opponents hear, but do not receive and obey. The Old Testament emphasizes God's giving of his word and the necessity of our attending to it; and these are the themes again when the Word himself speaks.

Share with the group a time when hearing the word of God made an impact on your life.

Can you recall other passages in Scripture where God’s word gave life?

To give life and to judge are interrelated, for to have life is to escape condemnation. The great events of the last day are already taking place. The judge they were expecting has come surprisingly, before the final end of this age; the life of the age to come is already available. All of this is accomplished, Jesus says, in the one who *hears my word and believes him who sent me*. This phrasing again points to the unity of the Father and the Son.

Those who recognize Jesus as the unique Son receive his words as having come from God and, accordingly, believe the Father who sent him. To know God is to have eternal life. Jesus' grounds for such audacious claims is the Father's authorization of the Son.

First, the deity of Christ is clear from the fact that the Father *has granted the Son to have life in himself*. That is, the Son himself is the source of life and not just an agent of God's power of life. Yet this possession of life was given by the Father. So again we have glimpses into the mystery of the relations within the Godhead and an emphasis on the gracious giving of the Father, who is the source of all.

Discuss the difference between believing the Jesus is a channel for God's power, and believing that power comes directly from Jesus? How do those points of view change our understanding of Jesus?

Second, the Son's authority to judge, which also comes from the Father, is bound up with his identity as the Son of Man. Jesus' use of the term picks up Daniel 7:13-14, where the Son of Man is an eschatological figure who is given "authority, glory and sovereign power" and whom "all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped." Jesus is saying that if they recognized him as the Son of Man and if they understood this identity aright, they would know they were facing their judge. In passing judgment on Jesus they were condemning their ultimate judge and thus passing judgment on themselves. The irony of this situation comes up over and over in the story.

Why do we associate negative feelings with judgement? Judging persons has a negative connotation in our current society. Why is that? Should we as Christians fear this judgement? How do we explain judgement to a skeptical society?

Jesus judges by his very presence – the light comes and exposes. Since people judge themselves by their response to the light, Jesus can say that he himself does not judge or condemn. But in a sense Jesus does judge in that he draws peoples' attention to how they respond to him. By exposing their response he makes them all the more culpable. **Thoughts on this?**

Read Romans 10:14-17

How is Paul shifting our thinking about hearing the word? How does this shift change how we view community and church?

When Paul draws a connection between hearing and believing, he reminds the saints in Rome about the social or interpersonal nature of Christian faith. Faith means something other than adherence to doctrines. Faith comes from listening to another's report. Faith comes when people hear God addressing them. Faith implies a communion shared with a communicative, expressive God. Christ still speaks today, through the audible and manifest words of his witnesses, a noisy group that includes among its members the Holy Spirit, the scriptures, and the church.

Can you be a solo Christian? What is the role of the church community? How has your faith been shaped by hearing how God is at work in others? How has other perspective on Scripture shaped your understanding of Scripture?

Read Psalm 62

This Psalm is for the asylum seeker, those who seek refuge from adversaries, those who yearn for security and stability. The Psalmist's experience of crisis prompts the big question of whether or not he (anyone?) can trust and take refuge in God in the face of enemies? The Psalmist's undeniable answer is, "Yes!" Especially at such a time, the only thing that offers true refuge is God, the steadfast one.

This Psalm describes waiting in silence? We've discuss the power of hearing? What is the power of silence? Have you experienced the power of silence?

Authority resides in the Son of God's voice, authority to initiate judgment that results in either life or condemnation. But how can this voice penetrate the ears of dead people? Probably not because of its decibel level but due to its innate ability to accomplish what it says. The eternal Word used this same voice to speak creation into meaningful existence. It summons four-day-dead Lazarus from his tomb. When Jesus discusses judgment in John, he places more emphasis on life than on condemnation. His ministry reverberates with sounds that beckon people toward life and safety, as when sheep respond to the trustworthy timbre of a familiar shepherd.

Spend a few moments at the end of your time together in silent prayer. Silence takes practice, our minds like to wander. Consider making silence part of your prayer rituals.

After a few moments, conclude with an Amen.