

Second Sunday after Epiphany
January 17, 2021
Cross of Glory Lutheran Church
Brooklyn Center, MN

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, whose voice is upon the waters, whose mercy is poured out upon all people, whose love cascades over all creation. **Amen.**

Let us take a moment of silence to confess our sin, trusting in the abundant grace of God.

Holy God, **we repent of our sinful ways: the ways we turn inward, failing to live your outward way of love. The ways we are stuck in the noise of our-selves. The ways we fail to listen to those unlike us. The ways we fail to pay attention to the overlooked and disregarded in our midst. Forgive us, gracious God, for all our sins—those we commit knowingly and unknowingly, individually and communally, by our actions and by our inaction. Provide us the stillness and silence needed to reflect and repent, that we might hear you speak words of divine mercy. Amen.**

God hears our confessions! Through the power and promise of † Christ Jesus, our sins are forgiven, and we are claimed as God's beloved children. In the wake of God's forgiveness, we are freed to live as beloved community, to work for justice, and to strive for peace in all the earth. **Amen.**

WELCOME SONG Promises Never Fail

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 You are with me what can separate us
You are for me what can stand against us
Your love it won't let go I know it won't | 2 Darkness shadows have no power over me
Fear is empty shame has no authority
Your love it won't let go I know it won't |
|--|--|

Chorus I know your thoughts Your plans for me are good
I know You hold my future and my hope
Your promises never fail Your promises never fail

- 3** Healing and freedom as You speak favor over me
Faith is breaking all impossibility
Your name has overcome Your name alone

Your promises never fail Your promises never fail

I am standing on every promise that You make
I will see it come to pass in Your name in Your name
Jesus I will trust every word I hear You say
I will see it come to pass in Your name in Your name

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

SONG OF PRAISE I'm Listening

- 1** When You speak confusion fades **Chorus** I don't wanna miss one word You speak
Just a word and suddenly I'm not afraid 'Cause everything You say is life to me
'Cause You speak and freedom reigns I don't wanna miss one word You speak
There is hope in every single word You say Quiet my heart I'm listening
- 2** When sorrows roll and troubles rage Your ways are higher
You whisper peace when I don't have the words to say You know just what I need
I won't lose hope when storms won't break I trust You Jesus
You keep Your word You see what I cannot see
And Your promises will keep me safe

PRAYER OF THE DAY The Lord be with you. And also with you.

Let us pray . . . **Holy God, you sent your Son to dwell among us as a living Word. By your power, a tune our ears and open our hearts for the work of holy listening, that we might hear your voice speaking through the unexpected prophets in our midst. We pray in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, Amen.**

READING: 1 Samuel 3:1-20

¹Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

²At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; ³the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" ⁵and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. ⁶The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." ⁷Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." [¹¹Then the LORD said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. ¹²On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. ¹⁴Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

¹⁵Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. ¹⁶But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." ¹⁷Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." ¹⁸So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him."

¹⁹As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. ²⁰And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Let Your Faith Be Stronger Than Your Fear

GOSPEL: John 1:43-51

The Holy Gospel according to St. John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." ⁴⁹Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON Rev. Ali Tranvik

171,476 words. That's the number of words listed as "currently in use" in the latest edition of the Oxford English Dictionary. Whether they come to us via the persistent stream of alerts and ads on our cell phones or the incessant chatter of the TV, we are bombarded the constant *noise* of words.

One effect of this noise, as Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor notes, is that words no longer function to communicate a truth but rather to sell a product. In our consumerist world, words have become cheap, or in some cases, have ceased to hold any meaning at all. It's like the housing complex called "Harbor View," when the closest body of water is over a hundred miles away, or the one called "Autumn Breeze," which may be true, but only for three months out of the year (Taylor). She says even churches can be guilty of this false advertising. She says, "Every time I pass a church with a sign out from that says 'Our doors and hearts are open to everyone,' she asks herself 'Whom do we think we are fooling?'" She says "I'd much rather see a sign that says 'We do the best we can,' or better yet, 'Christians meet here. Enter at your own risk.'"

Another side effect of all the noise, though, is that it has caused many of us to become hard of hearing.

We're not just *surrounded* by a barrage of words on signs, billboards, phones, radios, TVs, we constantly *contribute* to the noise ourselves. Whether it's our small talk chatter or the uninterrupted monologue of the voice in our own heads, we are quick to speak, slow to listen. Even when we *are* able to keep our mouths shut for a moment, listening becomes the mental rehearsal time to prepare the next thing we're going to say. Listening is essentially waiting for our turn to speak.

Now, speaking has its place. Last week, we talked about how part of our baptismal calling is to use our voice to echo God's voice. But today I want to suggest that we cannot speak—or at least we can't do so faithfully—until first we have listened.

And this is the much more difficult part, I think. And that's because, as we confessed together at the start of today's service, we are "stuck in the noise of our-selves." So consumed with the noise of our own dreams, interests, fears, failures, voices, that we struggle to really hear anyone's voice but our own. I often think I'm a good listener. But if I'm being honest with myself, I realize that I surround myself with people whose voices merely echo my own—so that I can say I'm listening, but really, I've chosen a chorus of other "me's:" friends that live in similar places, have similar incomes, drive similar cars, hold similar "values" and "beliefs," so that even when I listen, I am assured I won't hear anything other than *my own voice*.

Yes, listening is difficult because it means genuinely being open to a voice categorically "other" than my own. Listening is painful even—costly, we'd say in the Lutheran tradition—because it breaks us open. We might even say that it's *impossible*...

Samuel was also hard of hearing (and he didn't have modern technology to blame it on!). He too struggled with listening. Did you hear the story? It takes place in Shiloh, in the middle of the night, when Samuel is suddenly awakened by a voice. "Samuel!" God calls out into the silence. Thinking it must be Eli, Samuel runs to Eli and says "Here I am." This same thing happens again. "Samuel" God says. Samuel pops out of bed and goes to Eli who again tells him to go back to sleep. This happens *again*. And just like before, Samuel goes to Eli saying "Here I am."

Finally, it dawns on Eli what might be happening. If you hear the voice again, Eli instructs Samuel, this time say, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." So the fourth time God speaks into the silence, Samuel does as Eli instructed. "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." And God speaks, telling Samuel words that make his ears "tingle" (which is a cool thing to think about what God's Word does). Samuel is finally able to listen to what God is saying, but it takes a while. Because listening is difficult. It's costly. We might even say that it's *impossible*...

But there is some good news today, for Samuel and for us: there are people in our midst who can serve as our "hearing aids." People whose voices will aid us in hearing the voice of God. For Samuel, it was Eli—perhaps not the person we'd expect to be a prophet. He's quite elderly, after all. He's also nearly blind (3:2). Eli's age and his physical disability (at least in today's world) would render him overlooked and disregarded. Certainly, he wouldn't be listened to. But where his eyes fail him, his ears do not. *Eli* is the one who helps Samuel hear God.

What might this tell us about those we should be listening to? Who are the overlooked and disregarded in our midst? Whose voices might aid us in hearing the voice of God?

And what are those voice telling us? When Samuel finally listened, the words he heard were probably not ones he wanted to hear. They were difficult words. Costly words. Impossible words, detailing the destruction of the house of Eli. What difficult, costly, impossible words might we hear if we really listen?

This next week we commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. We often think of King as a celebrated and prolific prophet in American history, but we must remember, he was overlooked and disregarded

in his time (to put it lightly). Many northerners admired the message of love he shared across the South but were far less fond of it when King came north. They were fine hearing criticisms of others, but were much less sympathetic when King started talking directly about them. Many supported the lofty American ideals of his infamous “I Have a Dream” speech (or at least the most frequently-played clips of it) but turned on him when he started speaking out against militarism and America’s role in the Vietnam War. Many stood by him during his work in the Civil Rights Campaign but distanced themselves when he launched the Poor People’s Campaign (during which he was killed, when visiting Memphis to meet with sanitation workers). Many thought they supported King’s work in the abstract but simply thought he was saying too much or moving too fast when things got closer to home. We see this in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail.

To his white clergy peers, King writes: “In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sidelines and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, ‘Those are social issues which the gospel has nothing to do with,’ and I have watched so many churches commit themselves to a completely otherworldly religion which made a strange distinction between bodies and souls, the sacred and the secular [...] The contemporary church is so often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church’s often vocal sanction of things as they are.”

Listening is difficult. And yes, it’s costly. We might say that it’s *impossible*...

So how do we listen? How are we to do the impossible, to actually hear the voice of another, not to mention God’s voice? There’s more good news today (thank goodness!). The Good News is that Jesus Christ—the Word Incarnate—became flesh and dwelled among us. What does that have to do with listening? This Word pierces through the incessant noise of our-selves. This Word breaks open our ears, our hearts, our whole selves that we might actually listen to one another. That we might actually hear “the other.” Because it is there that Jesus dwells.

Did you hear our New Testament story? In it, Jesus’ own disciples ask of him: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Jesus of *Nazareth* is the ultimate “other.” Overlooked and disregarded. To the point of death on a cross.

Can anything good come out of Nazareth, from this Jesus? Can anything good come out of Shiloh, out of the mouth of old Eli? Can anything good come out of Georgia, so many people asked of King? Can anything good come out of Minneapolis? Out of Brooklyn Center? Out of Cross of Glory, we might even ask, as we look at our own old building, at our dwindling attendance, at this increasingly secular world?

But indeed, it is *these* very places where God speaks. It is *these* very people through whom God speaks. It is in the ignored, the overlooked, the disregarded in whom the Word dwells.

In the coming weeks, the Cross of Glory community will be embarking on a revisioning process, as we wrestle with what God is calling us to in this next chapter of our life together. You’ll be hearing more about this in the coming weeks, but as we begin to discern our vision together, today’s texts remind us that we must begin with listening. Our church leaders will be listening to *you*, asking you “What is *your* vision for this place?” We’ll be listening to our neighbors—to families that have recently moved here, to kids who go to school in this neighborhood, to city leaders, to the workers of Que Viet, Sun Foods, Evans-Nordby, the Sanctuary, the Hmong Senior Health

Center, Old National Bank, CAPI, Progeny, the neighbors all around us here on Brooklyn Blvd—asking them: “What is your vision for this place that we all live and work and call home?”

Listening is difficult. It’s costly. We might even say it’s *impossible*. But there are people all around us who can aid us in our hearing (which is good news for *this* wordy talker!). And there is a God whose Word of life--and of life together--pierces through the noise of our self-centered words and empowers us to say, “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” And who knows, when we listen to the God dwelling in the overlooked and disregarded in our midst, we just might hear a Word that will make our ears tingle.

Sources:

- Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” *The King Institute*, 1963.
- Lischer, Richard. *The End of Words* (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005).
- Luke Powery, “Lessons on Listening,” *Duke University Chapel*, Jan 18, 2015.
- Simone Weil, *Letter to Joë Bousquet*, 1942.
- Taylor, Barbara Brown. *When God is Silent* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1998).

HYMN OF THE DAY #574 Here I am, Lord verses 1, 2 and 3

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| <p>1 "I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?"</p> <p>2 "I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?" Refrain</p> | <p>Refrain</p> | <p>Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.</p> <p>3 "I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?" Refrain</p> |
|--|-----------------------|--|

CONFESSION OF FAITH Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

OFFERTORY

We invite you to mail an offering to the church (5929 Brooklyn Blvd, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429), or to visit our website (www.crossofglory.us) and make an online donation via the "Give" button at the bottom of the home page. Thank you for your continuing to support God's work here at Cross of Glory!

OFFERTORY RESPONSE #793 Be Thou My Vision verses 1, 2 and 4

- 1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
thou my best thought both by day and by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

- 2 Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tow'r,
raise thou me heav'nward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.

- 4 Light of my soul, after victory won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

OFFERING PRAYER

O God, receive these gifts as you receive us: like a mother receives her child, with arms open wide. Nourish us anew in your care, and empower us in faithful service to tend to others with this same love, through Jesus Christ, our saving grace. **Amen.**

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE

This week, instead of asking God to "hear our prayer," we will dwell in silence as we try to hear the prayers God is speaking to us. Each petition will begin with the pastor naming a concern, followed by a few moments of silence in which you are invited to listen. At the end of each petition, you are invited to respond "Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening."

Leader: We pray for the church... *[silence for listening]*

Leader: Straining our ears, we say, **All: Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening.**

L: We pray for our community... *[silence for listening]*

L: Straining our ears, we say: **A: Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening.**

L: We pray for our country and world... *[silence for listening]*

L: Straining our ears, we say: **A: Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening.**

L: We pray for the earth... *[silence for listening]*

L: Straining our ears, we say: **A: Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening.**

L: We pray for all our neighbors in special need of your loving care today... *[silence for listening]*

L: Straining our ears, we say: **A: Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening.**

Stir us with your voice and enlighten our lives with your grace, through the power of the Word incarnate, your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

And now let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING

May you hear the words of God the Father,

May you encounter the Word Incarnate, Jesus the Son,

✠ May you live by the words of the Spirit, speaking among us still. **Amen.**

SENDING SONG #513 Listen, God is Calling verses 1, 2 and 3

Refrain (Listen,) listen, God is calling, through the Word inviting,
offering forgiveness, comfort and joy.

(Listen,) listen, God is calling, through the Word inviting,
offering forgiveness, comfort and joy.

1 (Jesus gave his mandate:)
share the good news
(that he came to save us)
and set us free. **Refrain**

2 (Let none be forgotten)
throughout the world.
(In the triune name of God)
go and baptize. **Refrain**

3 (Help us to be faithful,)
standing steadfast,
(walking in your precepts,)
led by your Word. **Refrain**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace and listen up!

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

The Order of Service is from Evangelical Lutheran Worship which is commended for use in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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Worship Leadership:

Lead Pastor: Rev. Ali Tranvik

Pianist, vocalist: Mark Trease

Vocalist, choir director: Keith Williams

Lector: Dawn Bailey

Acolyte: Earl Simons

Tech Director: Ryan Bailey

Ministers: The people of Cross of Glory

Congregational Support as of 12/31/2020

Annual Budget: \$225,000.00

Year to Date Budgeted: \$225,000.00

Year to Date Received: \$225,853.63

Difference: \$853.63

Community Announcements:

- If you're worshipping with us on Zoom, join us for Virtual Coffee Hour, a short time of small-group fellowship, following today's service.
- Please see the gold insert about how to take part in the annual meeting and how to access the annual report before then!
- A special word of thanks on behalf of the church's leadership for your faithful stewardship. We are thrilled to report that, while 2021 pledges are still coming in, we expect to see a 10-20% increase in pledged giving over last year. We are humbled and grateful for the many ways that you continue to give so generously.
- The Covid-19 positive case count rates in our area are inching down! The 14-day positive case count for Hennepin County went from 38 people per 10,000 in mid-December to 36 people in early January, and from 60 to 48 in Brooklyn Center. These rates are still high enough that we remain in Level 1 of our Preparedness and Response Plan, so all gatherings will continue to be virtual with the exception of essential personnel and building maintenance. A full copy of that plan will be made available to you both electronically and in-print ahead of the annual meeting. If you have any questions, please reach out to the Task Force.
- All are welcome to take part in Bible Study this Tuesday morning at 9:30 am on Zoom.

- As we commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the synod invites you to take part in a joint worship service this week. The service was created in partnership with several African American clergy and leaders in Minneapolis. Watch the service by visiting www.crossofglory.us.
- On Sunday, Jan 24 from 2-5 pm, you're invited to attend a virtual public conversation with ISIAAH, a coalition of faith communities working for racial and economic justice in MN. Learn more about ISIAAH's work, hear from MN legislators, and find out how faith communities can get involved. Reach out to Mike McClanahan at mikemc5751@outlook.com with questions or for more info on how to sign up.
- Table Talks, our monthly Adult Ed series, will take place from 7-8 pm on Tues, Jan 26 on Zoom. This month's topic is Faith + Imagination. See the Glory Banner for more details and reach out to Pastor Ali with any questions.
- Please reach out to Pastor Ali with any other announcements or pastoral care concerns. You can reach her by email (atranvik@crossofglory.us) or phone (763-533-8602).