

- Maybe even get yourself a One-Year Bible, a Bible designed to help you read the whole Bible in one year.

3. **Situational Study:** participate in a Bible study or a LifeGroup that connects you with others who are studying a certain book or a particular topic.

- When we dive into Scripture, something incredible happens –
  - we hear God’s voice with greater clarity than ever before
  - and we are shaped by it into the people God calls us to be.

## V. Conclusion

- While it’s never easy, listening to Jesus ultimately comes down to paying attention,
  - like Michael’s bishop in his first call in Africa when he realized that God wanted him to help build an aqueduct, not a chapel,
  - and when he opened himself to the possibility that a first-time pastor might have actually discerned a new future for a dying church that he hadn’t imagined.
- Pay attention, dear Christian, for the One whom we follow, the One whose voice we are commanded to listen to,
  - is the Beloved Son of God, our beautiful savior, the King of all creation,
  - and he’s dying to talk to you.
- Thanks be to God. Amen.

## All Saints, Week #4

Our Savior’s Lutheran Church

February 10/11, 2018

Text: Mark 9:2-9

### “Listen to Him!”

#### I. Introduction

- Ever since we decided to do this series on the movie *All Saints*,
  - the words of God spoken from the cloud on top of that mountain where Jesus was transfigured
  - have been bouncing around in my head: “Listen to him!”
- It’s a straightforward command; it seems simple enough.
  - But I can tell you from experience, as many of you can as well,
    - it’s not easy at all.

#### II. Video Clip: God’s Voice

- Fr. Michael in the movie believes he has heard God’s voice calling him not to close the doors of All Saints Episcopal Church
  - but to plant thirty acres of crops on church property as a way to meet the needs of Karen refugees who had landed in their town in Tennessee
  - and provide an income stream that might just be enough to make the church viable.
- To him, it seemed straightforward; ultimately, he believed, it was a matter of faith.
  - To the bishop, it was something else altogether.
  - Take a look at how they hashed it all out:

{*Show video clip – “God’s Voice”*}

- “That voice you hear? Make sure it’s God’s voice and not your own.”
  - Hearing is fundamentally different than listening,
    - and, as Michael soon learned, listening – especially to the voice of God – isn’t as simple as it may seem.

#### III. Listening vs. Hearing

- Igor Stravinsky, the great 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian composer, once said,
  - “To listen is an effort, and just to hear is no merit. A duck hears also.”

- Hearing something is to be aware of it – you know that a sound was made.
- But listening involves paying attention to what is heard,
  - opening yourself to being affected by what you heard,
  - verifying with others that what you heard is actually what you thought you heard,
  - and maybe even taking action because of what you heard.
- But how do we apply that truth when we listen to Jesus?
  - It's not exactly like listening to someone who is standing in the room with us or talking with us on the phone.
  - And, as Michael found out, if you mention to someone, even someone you love like your spouse, that you have heard the voice of God,
    - more than likely you will get at least a raised eyebrow,
    - and at most you may even be dismissed as someone who isn't quite right.
  - Even so, there is no escaping the command of God: Listen to him!
    - So what do you do?

#### IV. Listening By Reading

- J. Robert Clinton believes that listening to Jesus has to do with reading – reading the Bible.
  - It's about taking what is fundamentally a spiritual exercise – listening to Jesus –
    - and undergirding it with something firmly rooted in the physical realm.
  - The two questions he asks are critical for us to consider:
    1. How do you know what God is going to do if you don't know what God has already done?
    2. How do you know what God is going to say if you don't know what God has already said?
  - And where do we hear of what God has already done and said?
    - In the Bible.
  - So Clinton advocates for diving into Scripture as a way of following God's command to listen to Jesus,
    - to open yourself to being shaped by the biblical narrative,
    - to begin to see life through the lens of the biblical narrative,

- to allow yourself to be informed by the biblical narrative.
  - It's there that you will discover a God who cares deeply for creation, for all of humanity.
  - It's there that you will hear of a God who keeps promises, who heals brokenness,
    - who breathes hope into a world bound by death by making resurrection a real possibility.
  - It's there where you will encounter Jesus' own words:
    - “Follow me.”
    - “Pay attention to what you hear.”
    - “Do not be afraid, only believe.”
    - “You give them something to eat.”
    - “Deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me.”
    - “Whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.”
- Understand, though, that this discipline of reading scripture in order to hear God's voice is best done over a lifetime.
  - It's not like you're going to open your Bible one day and – poof! – you discover everything there is to know about God,
    - like the person who jumps on a treadmill with great resolve after the holidays expecting to shed those 30 pounds in a couple of weeks,
  - Certainly God can and does work in mysterious and miraculous ways,
    - even in a one-time crack-open-your-Bible-and-viola!-here's-the-answer-you've-been-searching-for kind of way.
- But more often than not, hearing the voice of God in scripture will take time, even a lifetime,
  - so here are three suggested ways to read your Bible that may just open the door for you to obey God's command to listen to Jesus.
    1. **Devotional Reading:** quietly reflect on a portion of scripture as you start your day or at the end of your day.
      - Better yet, do this with someone you love, talk about what you read, and then pray together using the scripture to guide your prayer.
    2. **Familiarity Reading:** read the Bible like you would another book, from cover to cover, or at least entire books at a time.
      - Try to get the “Big Picture” of what the Bible is all about.