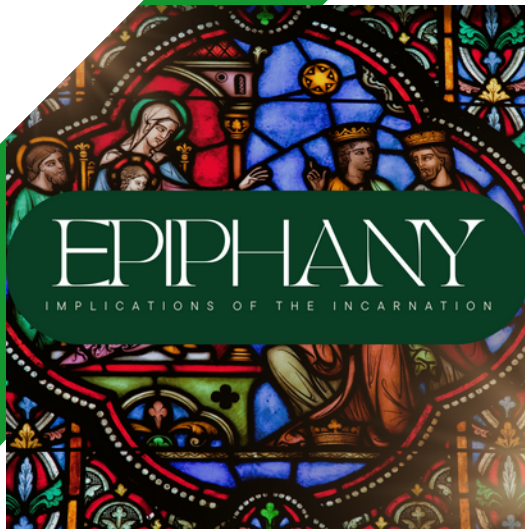
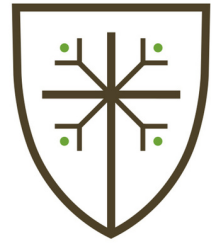


SERMON NOTES



January 14, 2024

SERMON INFO

TITLE

“Epiphany in the Dark”

PREACHER

Rev. Josh Keller

TEXTS

1 Samuel 3:1-10
2 Thessalonians 2:13-17
John 1:43-51

DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. Like Samuel, we often have trouble recognizing the call of God in our lives. What are some things that distract us from hearing or believing the call of the Lord when we do hear it?
2. What can you as an individual or the Church as a whole do to avoid simply condemning the darkness without leading people to desire the light?

SERMON IN SUMMARY

This week, Josh continued our Epiphany sermon series looking at the implications of the incarnation. He considered three points this week – the darkness in which our world exists, the call from God on our lives, and the change that can only occur through our response to that call.

The Dark

The Old Testament passage this week from 1 Samuel takes pains to show us that the land Samuel was born into was in darkness. God’s voice was not prized or wanted or listened to in Israel at that time. It mentions specifically that Eli the high priest’s eyesight had grown dim, indicative not just of a physical state but also of a spiritual reality. The land of Israel was stuck in a dark place and needed a voice to draw them out of darkness.

The description of Eli, his sons, and the people of Israel depicts the vice that the Christian tradition has named Acedia, or sloth. Sloth doesn’t have to be just laziness. Sloth can be inordinately busy. Sloth is an unwillingness to morally evaluate actions. And after too long on this path, you find that your envy has consumed your joy and you can’t see your way between a path that will destroy your life and one that will save it.

There’s another important image in the 1 Samuel passage. It states that “the lamp of God had not yet gone out.” The light of God was still burning. God has not left his people. He begins to call Samuel with a holy responsibility to lead the people out of darkness.

The Call

When God calls us, it is personal. Not just calling for someone but for a particular person – for Samuel or you or me. And, as Samuel found out, God’s call is persistent. In the quiet when Samuel lays down, God’s call returns to him time and time again. But Samuel needs the help of another to discern the call of the Lord in the voice he hears.

Samuel’s call from God changes from just a voice in the dark to an invitation from the Lord when he says, “I’m ready to listen.” He had to first recognize it for what it was and then submit to it.

The Change

Stepping into change has to be more than just recognizing that the darkness is bad. We must be given the desire to go out into the light. Every human is driven by a desire for something – good or bad. We leave the darkness because we desire the beauty of the light and the sun. We desire the light that is being offered to us. Jesus tells Nathaniel in our Gospel reading this week that he himself is the gateway through which we have access to this light. He himself is the very gate of heaven and the one who can pull us into a new life of change.

Jesus is telling Nathaniel, and telling us, that he is bringing us out into the light of the very life of God. God has opened heaven to you through Christ.