

LENT 2023
LISTEN
ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



Wednesday Lenten Worship
Finding a Word: Listening to the Texts

Prelude

Praise Him, Praise Him

Welcome—In our worship this week you're invited to gather up a few supplies to use as we put our spirituality into practice. We'll be focusing in on the wisdom we can gain from a deep dive into the word of God. We're going to get a little creative. Just a piece of paper and pen or pencil will work, but if you have some other things around like markers, colored pencils, even watercolors, that would be great, too.

Gathering—Come and rest. Come and listen. Lay the fullness of your lives before our Maker.

Music Refrain: Come and Find the Quiet Center, #477, verse 1
Come and find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead,
Find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:
Clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes, that we may see
All the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.

The Word of God is a gift we have been given to guide our lives and our faith, to reveal to us the story of God's love for God's people. God's Spirit of Wisdom makes the scriptures come alive for us. Truly, what we find in the Bible are living words, yet, it takes time and attention to really listen deeply to what God is speaking to us today through these ancient texts. In our worship, we will invite Wisdom to be our guide.

Music Refrain: Come and Find the Quiet Center, #477, verse 2
Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, touches base,
Making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,
Raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.

Examen—In the season of Lent, we especially focus on being honest with God and with ourselves, facing our brokenness and receiving God’s grace. Each Wednesday we will engage the spiritual practice of examen as we reflect honestly on our lives.

For that which, then, I thought was right...have mercy, God. *[pause]*

For that which, now, I regret...forgive me, God. *[pause]*

For that which, hence, I know not what to do...guide me, God. *[pause]*

Pastor: Come and rest, come and listen. Know that grace, forgiveness and guidance are available to you at each and every moment that we turn to receive them. Thanks be to God.

Listening—Each time we gather for worship we are taking some time to be in silence, getting reacquainted with intentional quiet as we listen for God’s still, small voice. All around us is a lot of noise and chatter. We keep tabs on our long to do lists. We let worries about things we can’t control seep into us. We recall that fight we had with a friend or partner. The news consumes us. It can be hard to clear that away as we listen for God. During our silence this time, you might notice that distracting chatter going on in your mind, and imagine it drifting away from you, like a feather floating on the wind, being carried away.

Silence

We Hear God’s Word

Proverbs 1:20-23 (CEB)

For our worship this week, I’d invite you to get ready those supplies you gathered during our welcome. As we listen to our scripture, in that *lectio divina* format, I really want you to focus in on a word or phrase that stands out to you. We’ll hear the scripture twice, just like we’ve been doing in each worship service this Lent, but this time we are going to do something with that word or phrase and our art supplies. We’re going to have time to just sit with that word or phrase and see where it takes us.

Wisdom shouts in the street;
in the public square she raises her voice.

Above the noisy crowd, she calls out.

At the entrances of the city gates, she has her say:
“How long will you clueless people love your naïveté,
mockers hold their mocking dear,

and fools hate knowledge?
You should respond when I correct you.
Look, I'll pour out my spirit on you.

Spirituality in Practice

“Finding a Word: Listening to the Texts”

The Wisdom tradition within Christianity invites us to love knowledge, especially the self-knowledge that comes from examining ourselves in relationship to the liberating Word of God. *Lectio divina* (“*divine reading*”) is an ancient tradition of mixing the reading of scripture with prayer and meditation. This is what we have been doing each Sunday and Wednesday during the season of Lent. Rather than an analytical approach to the words of scripture, it is a way for the words to simply be present and live in us. We’ve been inviting the Spirit to guide us as we listen to the scriptures, noticing what grabs our attention. What will we hear when we let go of what it all is “supposed to” mean and simply let it reside within us?

Wisdom invites us to go beyond the surface of what we encounter in God’s word. There is a richness and depth in what God has to say to us, but we only get to that deep meaning when we really take time to immerse ourselves in the text. When we let the words inhabit us, to settle within us, we begin to hear more clearly what God is speaking through those ancient words.

What was the word or phrase that stood out to you from our scripture? You’re invited again to share it in the comments of this video. Whatever it was, I want you to take that word or phrase and either write it down on your paper or come up with an image that represents it and draw that. Some of us do better with words, while others do better with visuals. Maybe try both. The idea is that we want to spend some intentional time mediating on that word or phrase to see what arises from within us as we let that Spirit of Wisdom direct us.

You’re welcome now to start doodling, brainstorming ideas related to that word or phrase that pop up in you, filling that page with color. You might do a word map where you see what other words come to mind as you reflect on that original word. Maybe you want to do some fun lettering with it, writing that word in a bunch of different ways as you let it fill you. When we tap into that creative side of ourselves—and we all have that side of us, I promise—it allows the Spirit to lead us to new places. Do with exercise setting aside all judgment. No one is critiquing your doodles or ideas. You are free to let God’s word move in you and through you and onto that page.

You can pause this video and take as long as you need with your creative time of reflection and meditation or you can come back to this later on. Let's offer up a world of prayer in thanksgiving for the Spirit of Wisdom moving through us.

Prayer: Spirit of Wisdom, you call out to us through the noise and chatter of our lives, inviting us to journey on a pathway of faithful living. We give you thanks, O God, that your wisdom guides our lives. We celebrate the creativity you have gifted us with that helps us go beneath the surface of your word to discover that rich and deep meaning it holds for us. Pour out your spirit among us and let your wisdom lead our way. Amen.

Hymn

Wonderful Words of Life, 668

Benediction— As you depart this space we've created together in our worship and enter the wilderness of your everyday life, know that God is with you. May you open your whole self to the call of Wisdom, guiding your life. May you listen deeply to the Holy Word of God. Whatever may come, let God be your safe place to go and your soft place to land. Amen.+

Postlude

Here's One