



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

January 13, 2008

1 Epiphany

There was an older gentleman who was beginning to suffer from some hearing loss so he got himself a state of the art hearing aid.

He was boasting to his friend about the technology that enabled him to hear so clearly. His friend asked him what kind was it.

The man replied, "Oh, about 2.30 p.m."

When God spoke to his people at the time of Jesus I believe that for many of those who heard it was like the man who asked what kind is it?

God sent Jesus because he knew that his children had the capability to turn their hearts and minds to the words of God that would make them a different kind of people. To build a different kind of community. To move from selfishness to selflessness. From doing godly things to being godly people.

So the first time that God spoke to his people we read this morning was when Jesus was baptized.

God said, "This is my son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

This is my son." God said that.

And I think that God thought that would be enough. His people had been waiting for a messiah and with the voice of God Jesus was affirmed by God as the beloved Son.

God thought it was enough but it wasn't.

Because it was not long before people were calling Jesus a fanatic, a troublemaker, a lunatic, even out of his mind and possessed by the devil. They doubted him even in his own hometown and there they tried to kill him.

The words of Jesus disrupted people's lives because he challenged their comfort zones. He took people away from their family and friends to be disciples who journeyed with him.

He challenged what was considered normal and said, by the word of God, God has a new way.

So when Jesus took his friends up on a mountain and was transfigured the voice of God spoke again and he said "This is my beloved son." But this time God had to add the words 'listen to him.' Listen to him.

God had spoken directly to those disciples and you think it would have made an impact but look what happened. The disciples came away from the mountain and continued to jockey for positions of authority. They wanted to be seen, they wanted to be great, they wanted to be top dog.

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Established in 1847

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Then a young man who was very rich came to Jesus and asked him what to do to inherit eternal life and Jesus said, "Give away all you have and follow me." The young man couldn't. Every year this story gets dragged out as an example for stewardship but the story is not about money. Jesus challenged this man to ask himself who is his God. And he chose the money.

Later Jesus goes to Bethany because his friend Lazarus has died. In Jesus' prayer before Lazarus is raised from the dead, he says, "Father I have come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name."

We are told a voice came from heaven and said, "I have glorified it and I will glorify it."

The people standing by said it was thunder.

It was this incident that begins the movement to get rid of Jesus.

In the life of Jesus, God spoke to his people and most people ignored it.

2000 years later, for the most part, we still ignore the voice of God.

We hear the word of God in our minds but we do not take the word of God to heart and live the words of God in and through our lives.

God sent Jesus because God believed in his children. God still believes that through Jesus we can be raised to a higher standard of living. A higher standard of loving. A higher standard of caring. A higher standard of sacrifice. A higher standard of accountability. All this builds a higher standard of community of faith that reflects the face of Christ to all of God's children.

The baptism of John was a baptism of repentance and forgiveness, but the baptism of Christ is a baptism of power and fulfillment. Our baptism has no less power and no less fulfillment.

God gives us power to become children of God and as children of God we are asked to listen to God. To take to heart the words of Jesus that are the word of God.

The questions each of us must ask ourselves are; how do we respond to the words that God speaks to us?

Do we listen to him?

Do we say it just sounds like thunder?

I believe God speaks very clearly through Jesus but if we do not listen, do not tune ourselves in, the kind of life God knows we can live will be far from the kind of life he knows we are living.

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It is as if when he asks us what kind is it.

We say, "Oh, about 2:30."

Amen

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