



Small Group Study Guide for January 31, 2021

Our Savior Lutheran Church and School

Theme: This week we continue our walk through the season of Epiphany. Epiphany means “manifestation” or “shining forth.” The readings appointed in the Church Year during this season focus on the truth that in our Lord’s Incarnation, God Himself has come to visit us. In our Old Testament reading from Deuteronomy 18, Moses has gathered together all the people of Israel. He explains and clarifies all that God revealed and delivered to him on Mt. Sinai. Moses commands the people to listen, pleads with them to not forget what God has done, what He continues to do, and all that He has promised. Particularly in our reading He reminds them of God’s promise to send prophets to them, of whom God will place His Word in their mouths to speak to the people. Ultimately, this promise is fully fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh, who comes speaking nothing but the Word of God for all the people of the world.

Getting Started:

1. The text for our reading is focused on the prophetic office. If you were asked to explain the role of the Old Testament prophets, how would you do so?
2. Have you ever wondered why God stopped speaking audibly to all His people as He does so often in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible)? In those first five books, God speaks audibly, often! If the ceasing of God speaking in that particular way leads us to conclude that God simply stops speaking to His people, how might that negatively impact us?

In the Word: Deuteronomy 18:15-20. Please read through this section of the text.

3. As Moses speaks to the people in this passage, there is a very important thing to note about why God is now (at the time of the Old Testament) speaking through prophets. Moses reminds the people of an event that took place at Horeb (more commonly known as Mt. Sinai). Go to Exodus and read Exodus 19:16-20:21. What request did the Israelites make to God? And what prompted it?
4. Back in Deuteronomy 18, check out verses 18-20, as the prophets are carrying out their prophetic duty, whose words are they actually speaking? What does God threaten will happen to those who do not listen to those words of the prophets, as well as false prophets?
5. How are the Israelites told to discern whether or not a prophet is false or true?

Putting it Together

6. As we gather, we gather as New Testament Christians. We live in the time of the mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize in the name of the Triune God. Something for us to note is that John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament style prophets. After all these years, has God now stopped speaking (Look at Hebrews 1:1-2)?

7. God is always at work through His Word. There we encounter the true and living God; all that He demands out of us, all that He has done for us, and all the promises He has given. God works through His Word in a number of ways: when it is read, when it is spoken, when it is delivered through Baptism and the Lord's Supper, etc. One particular way is during the sermon: there the pastor stands in the stead of Christ. The pastor speaks, but it is truly Jesus speaking through Him. That is why we have such a high view of preaching in the Lutheran Church. How then should we apply Deuteronomy 18:15-20 to our Lutheran understanding of preaching?

8. The sermon emphasized that the Word of God is life itself and that through it God gives life. One key phrase that was repeated was, "Listening to the Word of God is a matter of life and death." How does God give life through His Word? And why is listening to it a matter of life and death?

9. Also emphasized in the sermon was the reality that many different voices in the world, culture, even within our own sinful flesh seek to separate us from the Word of God by convincing us that they are more important. While many of these things are blessings, our sinful nature horribly distorts them. What are some examples of these voices?

10. The sermon concluded with the emphasis that through His Word, God creates faith. Through regular hearing/reading/receiving His Word, God continues to strengthen and sustain the faith He has given to us. Through His Word God has created life out of the death we were in because of our sin. While everything else, all the false voices, every other worldview, religion, etc. will pass away, the Word of God does not and cannot pass away. The Word of the Lord endures forever. How is that a great comfort to us, and what are some ways we can continue making sure the Word of God has a prominent place in our lives?

Prayer: Lord God, bless Your Word wherever it is proclaimed. Make it a word of power and peace to convert those not yet your own and to comfort those who have come to saving faith. May Your Word pass from the ear to the heart, from the heart to the lip, and from the lip to the life that, as You have promised, Your Word may achieve the purpose for which You send it; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.