

Advent Midweek 3, December 20, 2023
Text: Mark 9:7b
Theme: LISTEN!

There's a three-letter word that describes the month of December pretty accurately. In fact, this little word could be the essence of modern American life in this twenty-first century. The word is "din." Do you know it?

A din is a loud, continuing, overwhelming noise. Think of a fire alarm blaring. In many households, the radio or television is turned on first thing in the morning. It sets the atmosphere for getting ready for school or work. We hear the TV, the sounds of the shower running, rattling dishes and silverware. That all gives way to the radio in the car or the clamor of people on the school bus or the train. It is a constant din! There's Muzak in the office, in the grocery store, at the mall, and at the gym. You can't even escape it in the elevator! Sometimes we can even hear the mind-numbing thumping of music from the car next to us at a stop light—with the windows rolled up yet! Joggers, bikers and walkers have their earbuds shoved into their ears—so much for a quiet walk on the Prairie Path. Din. We live in a self-imposed din! I sometimes think we afraid of silence.

December often brings the worst din of all! Add to the normal routines all of the holiday preparations, shopping, and music, and

you have a recipe for a kind of cacophony that can drive you to distraction! And therein lies the problem—distraction.

In the Old Testament (1 Ki 19:11–13) Elijah was told, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.’ Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD. But the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire.” And after the fire came a still, small voice. And that was the voice of God. God does not speak in the din. That is why we are called repeatedly to listen!

It is no coincidence that centuries later, on another mountain, the Mount of Transfiguration, Elijah appeared with Moses and with Jesus to hear the Word and command of almighty God once again: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” (Mk 9:7b).

We cannot allow the din of December to drive us to distraction. We might miss the voice. We might miss the message. That is why this Advent season we are called to “Stop, Look, and Listen.” Sixty years ago, a man named Marshall MacLuhan coined a phrase, “the medium is the message.” He was talking about television and the fact that television exists has changed our world forever. Today, all manner of messages come to us on screens that send us a constant

input of information. This is a din that once again threatens to drive us to distraction—distraction from God’s message. We understand what MacLuhan said, but God knew it two thousand years earlier. The first chapter of the Gospel of John gives a name to Jesus that makes it unmistakable. This name is “the Word.” Jesus is called “the Word.” John’s Gospel begins, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (v 1).

When God gave us the message of his love, he didn’t send us a din of confusing noise and conflicting messages. His message came in the still, small voice of a Child. His message came to us in the form of communication itself, a human Child destined not to just tell of God’s love, but to be God’s love for us. You see, God’s medium is God’s message. That is why our theme tonight is “Listen!” Don’t miss it. Don’t miss “the Word.”

Give yourself a Christmas present this year. Let it be the message that Christ came to bring. If you want, take your own Bible, wrap it up in beautiful paper, and put it under your Christmas tree. Where the tag says “To,” write your name. Where the tag says “From,” write “God.” You won’t be surprised when you unwrap it, but you will be enlightened as you listen to the message of God. You will be reminded that amid the din of this Christmas season, God’s gift to you is a message of love in the person of his Son, Jesus. It is

as if God stands behind the manger of Bethlehem, extends his hands on either side of the infant Christ, and says, "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"