

<stop screensharing in Zoom>**Gospel lesson**

Jesus reassures [the disciples He is sending out to proclaim that the kingdom of God is near]:



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-birds-flowers/>;
courtesy of Lumo Project Films - www.lumoproject.com

Matthew 10:24-39

NRSV

²⁴ "A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master;

²⁵ it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

²⁶ "So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known.

²⁷ What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.

²⁸ Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

³⁰ And even the hairs of your head are all counted.

³¹ So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

³² "Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven;

³³ but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

³⁴ "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

³⁶ and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;

³⁸ and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

³⁹ Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

The Word of God for the people of God

<Children's/Interactive time>

What is today? <Let them respond>

It is Father's Day. Is/was your father strict? What happens if you do not listen to him?

<Let them respond>

Do fathers in general try to do what is helpful or harmful for their children? <Let them respond>

Today we heard about a father who had sons by different women. His wife had the younger son and did not want her son sharing his inheritance with the older son. Have you ever seen or heard about anything like that in this age? <Let them respond>

What did Abraham do when Sarah told him to kick out Hagar and Ishmael? <Let them respond>

Abraham prayed to God for guidance. What did God tell him? <Let them respond>

What happened to Ishmael? <Let them respond>

Tradition has it that Ishmael fathered twelve sons who founded tribes in the Arabian peninsula; he became the father of the Arab nations of today.

How do you think Ishmael felt about his father and his half-brother after being sent away?

<Let them respond>

Some argue that the tension between Jewish and Arab peoples goes back to that incident. The way Arab

women are treated has also been related to how Hagar was treated as a slave woman. What does that tell you about how our actions may affect others?

<Let them respond>

Our choices have effects through generations far beyond what we may imagine. Do all parents make good choices all the time? <Let them respond>

Let us pray for fathers on this Father's Day.

<Prayer from UM Book of Worship p.441, as taken from Book of Blessings, U.S.A., 20th Cent., Alt.>

- For our fathers, who have given us life and love, that we may show them reverence and love, we pray to the Lord . . .
- For fathers who have lost a child through death, that their faith may give them hope, and their family and friends support and console them, we pray to the Lord . . .
- For men, though without children of their own, who like fathers have nurtured and care for us, we pray to the Lord . . .
- For fathers, who have been unable to be a source of strength, who have not responded to their children and have not sustained their families, we pray to the Lord . . .
- God our Father, in your wisdom and love you made all things. Bless these men, that they may be strengthened as Christian fathers. Let the example of their faith and love shine forth.

- Grant that we, their sons and daughters, may honor them always with a spirit of profound respect.
Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

<resume screensharing in Zoom for the hymn>

<Hymn "Grace Alone">

TFWS #2162>

Message: Hearing the Voice



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/forming-a-family-preparing-a-people/week-3-fourth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-3-fourth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

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Almighty Lord who hears our voices when we cry out,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may hear Your voice, trust faithfully in Your
promises, and help others to experience Your grace
as well. Amen.

As we continue our sermon series today, we think
about "Hearing the Voice":

"Listening for God amid a painful, confusing story—
and learning how God meets the cast-out and
suffering."

I went to the store this week, and I do not understand the math of paper products. On my list were paper towels. I wanted a large package of good quality towels at the best price available. As I contemplated the shelves of products, I grew very confused.

One package said "4=8," another said "6=18," yet another proclaimed "6=24." I could not even judge prices based on number of sheets because some were full size sheets and others were "Select A Size."

I finally gave up and just got a large package of rolls that would fit our towel holder in the size sheet that we most commonly use, and went on to the toilet paper section. Same thing all over again!

The internet advises calculating price by square foot, but even that gets funky when considering various plys. It is hard to understand what is best.

Trying to figure out what is best for life's choices gets really difficult sometimes too. Abraham was a happy father with two sons to cherish, and Sarah changed the math: one legitimate heir equaled all he needed. What was he to do? He turned to our father in heaven and asked God, the One who had made the impossible happen in providing Isaac as his heir in the first place.

Abraham listened to the voice of God and acted faithfully. When Hagar and Ishmael were in the wilderness, God listened to the voice of Abraham's son and acted faithfully toward him as well. God's

word is good and we can trust God rather than live in fear.

The psalmist sounds like Hagar crying out in the wilderness, asking God for help when they finally got desperate. Why do we so often wait until we are desperate to ask God for help, instead of asking for guidance as soon as we are in a new situation? Do we think God does not hear our voices unless we put a note of desperation into them?

As Jesus told His disciples, God knows us intimately (even down to the number of hairs on our heads) and values us far more than any worldly thing (such as money for sparrows). God gave Jesus to die on the cross for us to show how important we are to God.

Yet it seems the only places where people hear God's voice telling them that, the places where people see God's grace, are when they are crushed beyond their ability to deal with the challenges upon them, by the cruelty of sin in their lives. In that darkness, the light of God's grace is most clearly seen.

The question Paul asked then comes to mind: "Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound?" He answers it immediately and passionately: "By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?...[You] must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Sinful fear makes us afraid to stand up for what is right and good in the face of wrongdoing. Right now, corrupt politics is tearing apart the social

structure of our country at the expense of the poorest and neediest, yet we hesitate to speak out against the greedy actions of lawmakers because we do not want to start fights in our households and community.

Such fear sinfully causes allegiance to political party to outweigh our allegiance to God. But we do not need to fear when we know God hears our voices. God will walk through trouble with us and help us find a path forward to something far better than where we are now, if we just listen to God's voice.

Internationally, other countries detest our current president for the destructive acts of war he has done in order to line his own pockets. Jesus said, "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!"

Other countries blame us, the American people, as the ones who put Trump in power, regardless of whether or not we voted for him. Do we really want to remain aligned with someone seeking personal profit at the horrendous expense of others, or do we want to be aligned with the One who created and loves all of us?

Take time this week to be sure you are following God. Listen to hear God's voice. Pray for guidance and look for opportunities to share love that calls out evil and builds healthy relationships instead. Let go of the fear that stops you from showing that love.

Do what is right and good, even if your family thinks

you are nuts, as long as it aligns with the nurturing love Jesus taught and lived. Let the Holy Spirit's power sustain you in the struggle that is life, that - like the voice of the boy Ishmael in the wilderness growing into the voice of many nations - in heeding the voice of God, your efforts may grow into something far greater than you can imagine.