

These words we have heard represent only a few of the countless passages in scripture that refer to God's communication with us and our communication with one another in his name.

The God of the Bible is a **ceaselessly communicative God**—that is part of what it means to say that the Lord is a living God. In the OT, unlike the idols that stand mute, the God of Israel addresses personally those whom he has called into covenant. He is a God who speaks and acts and whose speech is itself a form of action, causing what God intends to come into being.

In the NT the self-revelation of God is focused in the beloved Son Jesus, the Word made flesh. He is the focal point of all that God has said, is saying, and will say. Every supposed revelation of God is to be tested and judged by what we see and hear in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He is God's unique, decisive Word to us.

How does the living God speak?

1. **God speaks through creation.** The psalmist declares, "The heavens are telling the glory of God and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork." Creation itself points in some ways to its Creator, though not in clear, unambiguous ways. We do not learn of the redeeming love of God in Christ merely by observing nature or peering into the far reaches of the universe with the Hubble telescope. A clearer, more focused revelation is necessary.

2. God speaks through the **word of God written in Scripture.** This for Reformed Christians is the primary way God speaks. God reveals who God is and what God promises and commands through the written word as illumined by the Holy Spirit. Not by the word alone, but by the word illumined and planted in our hearts by the same Spirit that inspired its writing and has tended its preservation over the years. No Presbyterian attempt to hear God's speech can ignore the primary means of God's self-communication in the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

3. God speaks, as we said, uniquely and decisively, in **the Word made flesh**, Jesus the Christ. As the Letter to the Hebrews puts it, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our ancestors by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son whom he has appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." At the end of May Reformed Christians throughout the world will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Theological Declaration of Barmen, written in Nazi Germany primarily by the Swiss theologian Karl Barth. One of the most important affirmations of the Barmen Declaration is that "Jesus Christ, as he is attested in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to obey in life and death."

4. But not only does the living God speak through the works of his creation, and through Scripture read, interpreted, and preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, and through Jesus, the Word Incarnate, God also **speaks into and through our ordinary lives**, as least God does so, if by prayer and scripture the ears of our hearts are attuned to the frequency of God's speech.

The Presbyterian novelist/preacher **Frederick Buechner** puts it this way,

“If God speaks anywhere, it is into our personal lives... To try to express in even the most insightful and theologically sophisticated terms the meaning of what God speaks through the events of our lives is a precious a business as to try to express the meaning of the sound of rain on the roof or the spectacle of the setting sun. But I choose to believe that God speaks nonetheless, and the reason that his words are impossible to capture in human language is of course that they are ultimately always incarnate words. They are words fleshed out in the everydayness no less than in the crises of our own experience.”

“If I were called upon to state in a few words the essence of everything I was trying to say both as a novelist and as a preacher, it would be something like this:...p, 2 LTL

BUT...if God's speech is intensely person, addressing us as individuals in the dense particularity of our own lives, what, if anything, does that have to say in regard to our consideration this weekend of **communication technologies**? I don't believe that it says a decisive NO to electronic communications, but I do think that it raises a yellow caution flag that we need to take seriously. Neil Postman, interesting name for someone in communications theory, Postman warns that we should ask of any new technology, **“What problem do I have that this technology solves?” And will this technology really solve the problem or merely mask it or create other problems?** Technology, as we all know, can be very seductive and time-intensive. But even worse, it can distance us from other flesh and blood human beings. “God so loved the world...that he did not send an email.” He sent an incarnate human being, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh.

Albert Borgman, professor of philosophy at the University of Arizona, says that in our society it is impossible to enclose technology in boundaries. We can only limit it and employ it appropriately by relating it to a center of meaning and value... what he calls a **“focal concern.”** A “focal concern” is a dominate value, a central priority, that orders our other concerns. In the church one of our “focal concerns” would be to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Or “to do justice, to love kindness, and walk humbly with God.” Or to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself.”

Before we look at the ways we seek to communicate, and the technologies we use to do so, I want us to think together this evening about who we are as a church and what it is that we are seeking to communicate. **What is the focal identity of the congregation?** What is

distinctive about our life together in Christ? What is our core identity? And how do keep our focus on the mission and vision of our church so as not to get distracted by the bells and whistles of a new toy, a new tool, a new device? If we lose our focus on what is central and essential to the life and ministry of the Church of the Incarnate crucified, risen Savior, even the best and most sophisticated means of communication will erode, and in time undermine, not enhance, the embodied life of this part of the Body of Christ on earth.

With that word of warning in mind, let us now come to the Table of the Lord to celebrate Christ's living presence, not in virtual images or words alone, but in broken bread and poured out wine.