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### Mother's Day – May 9, 2010

Sermon Texts: Psalm 67  
John 14: 22-29  
Acts 16: 9-15  
Revelation 21: 10, 22 – 22: 5

Sermon Title: "How Do I Get God In My Life?"

Sermon Topic: Walking with God

Sermon Purpose: To teach the benefits of walking with God and trusting His promise

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*Sermon Prayer: God, may the words of my lips inspire prayerful consideration of your will in the lives of those who hear and in the worlds of those who commit their lives to you. In Jesus' name, I ask it. Amen.*

If Helen were alive today, she would have been 28 years old. However, that was not to be. Helen was kidnapped from a campsite in Montana and brutally murdered at the age of 7. As savage as the killing was, as painful as it was for her family, the story did not end with Helen's death. The story continues with her mother's message.

Penny is a woman who has known pain and loss, anger and grief, but she is also a woman who has learned forgiveness. She knows the gut-wrenching work of forgiveness, but she has not run from it; she has struggled with it and has gained a peace that many prevent themselves from tasting. In turn, she has become a credible messenger of forgiveness. She walks with God.

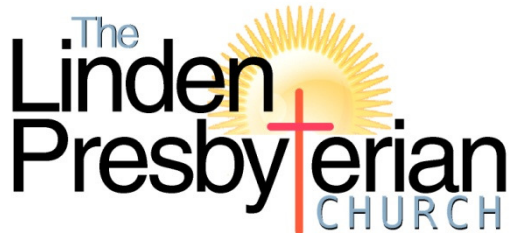
How is it that a mother whose child is brutally murdered can come to peace and forgive the killer, while others of us hold ourselves prisoners to a grudge over what we perceive to be a snub or an derogatory look, or even that someone failed to make us the center of their attention?

Have you ever wondered why the Penny's of this world walk in peace, while others of us insist upon our right to be unforgiving and become sick in the exercise of this resentfully held right?

Ryan White was a nationally known 18-year-old hemophiliac who died from AIDS in 1990. Why is it that the Ryan White's of this world so often seem peace-filled, while people with so much less difficulty exude anything but peace? Rather, they choose to allow something as simple as a traffic jam to ruin their entire day, or too many weeds in the garden to ruin a whole week. Why does God more obviously come to live with some, while apparently remaining at a distance from others?

This is something similar to the question that is asked of Jesus in the first verse of today's Gospel Lesson. Verse 22 says, "Lord, why do you reveal yourself to us and not to the rest of the world?" John tells us that the question came from Judas; but it was not Judas Iscariot. Perhaps the question could just as easily have come from us. Why does God seem to walk with some people and not with others?





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As we listen to Jesus' response in today's Gospel passage, the answer to the question becomes painfully obvious. The problem is not with God's '**choosiness**,' as much as it is with our own **closed-mindedness**. At times it's almost as if we choose to **defy** the Gospel. Jesus calls us to **forgive** and we **insist** on **revenge**. Jesus tells us **not** to be **afraid** and yet we **bind** ourselves in fear in so **many ways**.

Today, our Lord tells us that God makes his home with those who obey his teachings. This isn't a matter of God being choosey. Rather, it's a matter of God coming in where there's room for **him** and for his **love**. Narrow-mindedness is really a lack of love. Some of **our** narrow-mindedness (or our lack of love) deprives God of the space he needs to live in our lives. God **is** love and can only live **in** love. Jesus makes no bones about it. The things he taught are the message of God and he won't have it compromised.

Most of us don't tell our secrets to those people who don't care about us. It's not that we want to be ornery. It's just that we simply know that what we say won't be heard. We don't spend a lot of time with people who don't value us. We don't bother to hand the blueprints of our lives to someone who will turn right around and throw them out. We don't take time to share our **dreams** with those people who would **belittle** them or tell us what's **wrong** with them. Again, it's not a matter of us trying to be vindictive; it's simply a matter of knowing somewhere, deep within us, that if our love is to be received, it must be accepted. Even the pervading love of God must be accepted in order to be received.

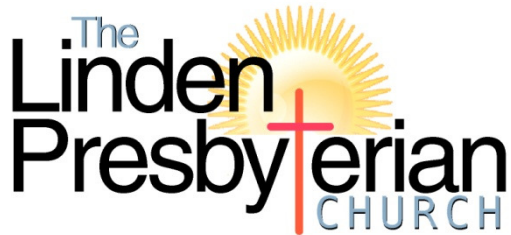
So, how do we accept the love of God? How do we **invite** God to walk with us? In reality, the invitation has already been given. And **God** is the one who invites. He always **has**! Remember when Jesus reminded us that it was **he** who chose **us**?

So, how do **we** accept the invitation? How do we say, "yes" to having been chosen, so that God can make a home in us? Jesus answers that question quite definitely and definitively, today. He tells us that we do it by allowing ourselves to be guided by his Word. "Anyone who loves me will be true to my Word. My Father will love that person and we will come and make our home with that person."

People who read golf magazines and who **practice** their game have a better chance of becoming better golfers than those who don't. Those who read about gardening and spend time working the earth and learning about the soil grow more attractive and productive gardens than those who simply page through a bulb catalog, from time to time. People who actually spend time sitting at the computer keyboard and working with the programs become more accomplished in managing the files and the programs, creating the reports and spreadsheets, the charts and the signs, producing more product and saving time and energy than those who simply glance at a sales brochure, or sit at the console and allow their fears to paralyze them as they face this blank monitor screen and stare at the keyboard. The folks who excel at most things are those same folks who spend time with it, who study it, who reflect on it and who put themselves **into** it. Should it surprise us that the process is **no** different when it comes to excelling in our attempts to be true to the word of Jesus?

Now, before you get started with a rebuttal, I am well aware that Jesus does not publish books or magazines, and he doesn't leave messages on our voice mail. But! (And that's a **big** but...) There **are**





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many well-spoken and holy people who **do** write **about** Jesus, **about** his message and **about** its relevance to our lives. And God has seen to it that we **do** have the **main** book, the Holy Scriptures of the Bible and – in particular – the New Testament, because that’s where the Good News comes into play as we focus our attention on the New Covenant in Christ’s blood, death, burial, and resurrection. And Christ Jesus **does** continue to speak to us in so many ways – through the pulpits of our churches, through the children of our families, through the workings of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and – most of all – through the answers we receive to our **prayers**.

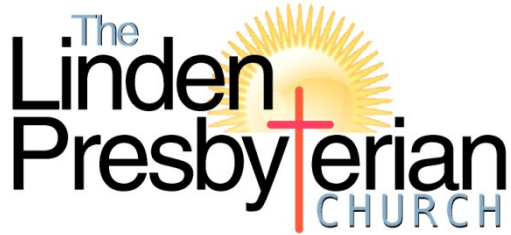
The question doesn’t revolve so much around the issues of whether or not God speaks to us, or writes to us, or communicates with us. The issue is whether or not we will take the time to listen, to reflect, or to respond. People who are too busy with other things **don’t** excel at golf. They’ve made a **different** choice. Those who are too preoccupied to pay attention to their gardens wind up growing **weeds** and going to the produce store for their tomatoes and peppers, cucumbers, lettuce and corn. They end up **buying** their bouquet from the florist. But, you see, they – too – have made a **choice**. Those who allow their fears to keep them from pressing the keys on the computer keyboard or from “clicking” that mouse will send that material out to a **printer**. But, they – too – have made a choice. (Anyway, florists and printers and produce store managers have to make a living, too.) But, the point is that when we are too consumed with other details in life, our oneness with the Word (according to Jesus) is going to be worn thin, and – sooner or later – it’s going to break. When that happens, we’ll be holding on to a broken string with nothing at the other end but dead air. There’ll be no assurance, no support, and no hope.

When Scott Peck, the well-known author of *People of the Lie*, was once asked how he could afford the time to pray with all that he had going on in his busy schedule, he responded that **because** of his schedule he couldn’t afford **not** to make the time. To attempt to live according to the word of Jesus without taking the time to hear it well, to reflect on its meaning, and to meditate on its relevance to our life, just does not work very well. Each of us can attest to that from our own experience.

Unfortunately, many of us need to be hit on the head by a loss, or an illness, or some tragedy before the **truth** of this concept is able to sink into our terribly busy lives and our extremely thick skulls. Most of our lives have such major learning moments, but so often they are just that: moments. They **don’t** seem to **last**. And, when they’re **gone**, the lesson often fades with them.

This is why we need to learn the **ongoing** lessons. This is why we need regular exposure to the Word we claim to be so important. We cannot nourish ourselves and continue to grow healthy by eating only when we’re sick, or only a few times a month, or during the course of a major holiday once or twice a year. Only regular, daily nourishment will work. Try to feed on the Word of God as regularly as you feed on the food you use to sustain your body and watch what happens to the way you walk, the way you live, the way you relate, the way you speak or forgive, or deal with difficulty. See what happens to you. You may even discover something that has already been true for a long time. God **does** live with you. God **does** make a home with you, and **knowing** that can make all the difference.





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Notice that Jesus leaves us with a promise, today. He promises us that we won't be alone in this endeavor to be at one with him. He says that he'll send His Spirit to instruct us in everything! There's nothing about you that does not concern God. **You belong to God!** You are still being created by God and refined by God. You need only to take the time to **listen** to the **Spirit** of God, which, if today's Gospel Lesson is true (and we believe it is) – is speaking **inside you**. Slow down and listen! It's then that forgiveness can be your way of life, and that peace – as Jesus promises today – can be with you. Go with God.

Amen.

