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March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Scripture: Matthew 3: 13-17

Sermon Title: Slow to Speak: An Invitation to Quiet

Prayer...

Introduction of Lent:

- I Love Lent- Intentional time of deepening our intimacy with God and spiritual practice. 40 days of repentance and spiritual practice in preparation for a meaningful Holy Week and Easter Sunday. Practicing Lent is counter cultural.
- An Invitation to Slow: Resist the Speed of Now, Make Space for Quiet, and Cultivate an Intentional Life.
- First Chapter Slow to Speak: An Invitation to Quiet

This morning before we look at the first chapter of our book study, I want to remind you of Jesus' baptism. (Reflect on the story)

The central gift of the story is that Jesus hears the voice, this is my Beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.

Knowing he is beloved helps Jesus prepare for the wilderness, where he is tempted by Satan in the wilderness after fasting for 40 days.

The Holy Spirit leads him into the wilderness and is with him there.

Lent is a 40 day period that mirrors the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness.

Traditionally, the fasting that people do during Lent reminds us of Jesus' fasting. (Often fasting is the only thing people know about Lent, but there is so much more to this season. My encouragement is to fast from something if that feels helpful to you. I plan to fast from social media. Do not make Lent burdensome. It is supposed to create freedom in your life not another burden. You may also choose not to fast, but to add something like a spiritual practice. Maybe you wish to read more or participate in some form of art like painting. Maybe you want to spend more time walking in nature or you might

want to participate in some form of service). Lent should help us deepen our love experience of God.

I think of Lent as a time for us to center in the truth that we are the beloved of God.

Spiritual practices help us rest in God's love.

This Lent as I have mentioned we are looking at the book by Mark and Lisa McMinn, *An Invitation to Slow*. In the Introduction to this book, we read...

*An Invitation to Slow*.

“We live in a day of fast information, fast fingers, fast food, fast shipping, fast words, fast anger, and fast judgment. In the pages that follow, we invite you into slower, quieter, more intentional ways of being, exploring how these might attune us to—and help us trust—the slow work of God in order that we might love one another and the world as God does.”

In the first chapter of *An Invitation to Slow*, Lisa and Mark McMinn remind us that we are living in a loud world. They tell a story of visiting a local winery on Valentine's Day and finding it to be less relaxing because people at the tables near them were loudly talking, partly due to having a little too much wine.

They also highlight that in our world of social media and political tensions we are often thrust into intense noise that causes people to feel anxious, angry, and overwhelmed rather than calm, quiet, and kind.

Sometimes in our human relationships we also feel an inner tension that leads us to be judgmental towards others. Mark and Lisa remind us we can have self-compassion for ourselves in those moments that also can lead us to be kind to others.

One of the gifts of this first chapter, is that we are invited learn ways to cultivate a quieter life that enables us to feel more connected to God, ourselves, nature, and each other.

We are invited to realize that our greatest sense of quiet comes from the awareness of our belonging. The McMinns write,

“Our very existence is possible because we belong to God, we come from God, we return to God. The air in our lungs, the water in our muscles, our bones and blood are drawn from matter, from substances drawn from the earth that Christ, as the Word of God, spoke into being and holds together. We inhabit a living world created by God, held together by Christ.”

The McMinns suggest that to live in a quiet way, calls us to live out of quiet places. They provide the example of going to an unprogrammed worship service in a Quaker church and taking time to gaze at the beauty of nature by noticing the movements of birds in the sky. In this first chapter, Lisa also teaches about her practice of Centering Prayer.

She describes Centering Prayer as a period of 20 minutes where one sits in silence and consents to God’s presence and action within. In

Centering Prayer one chooses a Sacred Word, such as love, peace, rest, Spirit, or Jesus. As you settle into a chair, you introduce silently your sacred word and then during the 20 minutes of silence, when your experience thoughts, you simply choose to return to your sacred word as a way to focus on simply being with God.

This is what she writes about her practice of Centering Prayer.

“Most often I get out of bed in the morning, slip into a sweatshirt and pants, and head out to the barn with Oliver, our little dog. I love most of all the winter days when the stars are still visible in the night sky on my short trek. We climb the steps up to a prayer cabin that sits above the goat barn and pray. Oliver sits quietly on my lap and models stillness, and maybe his attentiveness is his own form of prayer. Then we go down to greet, feed, and open the barn for Hazel and Clara our Nigerian Dwarf goats, and their daughters, Oakley and Julian. The routine is grounding and centers me as I begin the day.”

My Centering Prayer example: Similar to Lisa, I practice Centering Prayer. Instead of once a day, I do it once per month when I lead our First Friday Prayer Retreats...

I hope our exploration this morning into the story of Jesus' baptism and into the first chapter of our Lenten book study, "An Invitation to Slow" helps you enter the season of Lent with anticipation that this might be a time to center into the truth that we are beloved of God.

All of us are God's beloved.

I think Jesus needed that encouragement from the Holy Spirit prior to the Holy Spirit leading him into the wilderness.

Remember the Holy Spirit was with Jesus in the wilderness and I believe while Jesus was in the wilderness he remembered the words You are my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. It was this truth that might have give Jesus the courage to say no to the devil and to worship God alone.

Let this Lent be a time of spiritual formation where you experience God's love.

Consider spiritual practice of quiet, such as.

Centering prayer

Lectio Divina- where you read a portion of Scripture slowly or prayerfully.

Prayer- share your feelings in conversation

Silent Prayer. Contemplatives Christians like to remind us that God's first language is silence.

Experience God in Nature.

I know we live in a world of noise and it is easy to enter into that noise with restless hearts. May this season of Lent be an invitation to be slow to speak and quick to listen to the still small voice of God



and the voice of others, particularly the voice of the vulnerable in our world.

May we hear God's voice of love. "You are my beloved son or daughter." Then as we hear God's voice of love, may we rest in the quiet, knowing that we deeply belong to God and are one in Christ and one with all of creation.

AMEN.

## Matthew 3:13-17

### The Baptism of Jesus

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” 15 But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God’s Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from the heavens said, “This is my Son, the Beloved,[a] with whom I am well pleased.”