Called by Name Part 1: Called by the Gospel

Opening Thoughts: No one was there to hear God’s voice when he spoke the universe into existence, and very few people have ever heard his audible voice since. Yet, in spite of this, God is in constant communication with his creation. God still creates; he still provides. God continuously calls all people to himself by grace through faith. Through his Word and Sacrament, God bridges the otherwise unbridgeable gap that our sinfulness causes. We hear and follow God’s calling through ears of faith.

Read Romans 10:17

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, we are thankful you have called us to yourself and brought us together to study and learn from your holy Word. Bless us with the guiding presence of your Holy Spirit, and the wisdom that can only come from you. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Called by the Gospel: Through the Gospel of Christ, every believer is called to God. This call is received through the gift of faith. It brings our justification and sets into motion our sanctification. God does this without any consideration of who we are or what we are able to do. This call is based exclusively on God’s will and his grace, and goes out to all humanity.

Read Isaiah 43:1

Discuss what this verse means to people in general and to you personally.

As Christians, we believe God communicates with us, and that he has chosen to reveal himself to us in ways we can understand.

Read Romans 1:19-23

- According to this passage, what is one way in which God makes himself known to us?

Read Genesis 1:26-31

Human beings were created different from the rest of creation. In Genesis 1:27, it says we were created in God’s image. Although theologians throughout the centuries have debated exactly what God’s image means, it is clear Adam and Eve were created into three relationships:

1. a relationship with God
2. a relationship within the rest of creation
3. a relationship with each other
Read Genesis 2:17
When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, the relationship between God and people was destroyed. There is nothing we can do as human beings to restore this relationship. Restoration has to come from God. Our relationships with our world and each other were also damaged, but still remain. These relationships are daily struggles and are polluted by self-interest and sin.

Read Psalm 8
- How does God feel about his creation?
- How does God feel about you?
- What comfort can be drawn from this?

We often think God’s image means the human ideal, or perfection of our bodies. It is easier to understand and see the physical. Unfortunately, this leads to the opinion that people with disabilities are something less than God’s ideal. Many teach that those with disabilities are the result of sin, and that they serve as a reminder of the world’s imperfection.

Read Psalm 51:5 and Psalm 139:13-17
- Think specifically about a person you know with a disability; how do these verses apply to them?
- How would you feel if people thought of you as a reminder or evidence of the effect of original sin?

Being created in God’s image has nothing to do with our physical self. Like God’s righteousness, it comes from outside us. It is completely independent from anything we can do. It does not depend on the judgment of others. It is, like all good things, a gift from God our heavenly Father.

- Have you ever wondered why God allowed something to happen?
- Have you ever expected God to “fix” those with a disability some day?

What if people with disabilities are exactly as they should be? What if the person with intellectual and developmental disabilities is just as God intended to create them?

Questions such as these are well beyond human understanding. The answers are not clearly revealed in Scripture. However, we can know God sees every human being in the same way. He loves us all the same and wants to repair each relationship with him. None of us is less broken than the other; none of us live as God intended.

The Call of the Gospel is our first calling from God. Although the Gospel completes us in God’s eyes, it is only the beginning of our life with Christ. As God maintains his relationship with us, he continually molds, equips and prepares us to do the good works for which we were created.

Closing Prayer: Lord God, we are thankful you have created us in your image and loved us enough to send your Son Jesus Christ to pay the price for our sins. We know you have called us by the Holy Spirit and the Gospel into a relationship with you. Help us extend your love to all those around us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.