Before and after the sermon

How to Listen to a Sermon

Studies have shown that people who read the Bible passages that are the preaching texts in advance report finding much more meaning in hearing a sermon. As you prepare to hear the proclamation of the Gospel, there are some things you can do to prepare.

First, tell your preacher you want to read those Bible passages ahead of time and ask that they tell you what you can expect to hear.

Second, read the Bible passage and have the word "TRIP" in mind. "TRIP" can help you think of Scripture as God's moving from eternity to you right now. The four letters in "TRIP" stand for thanks, regret, intercession, and purpose. Once you've read a passage, think about those words in relation to the passage. You might even jot some notes here.

- T is for **thanks**. What in this passage makes me thankful? What does it reveal about God that I'm grateful for?
- R is for **regret**. What in this passage makes me regret my action or reluctance to act? What does it show me that I repent of or need to be forgiven for?
- I is for **intercession**. To intercede means to advocate or go to bat for someone else. What in this passage points me beyond myself to others in need? Being specific helps here. Name names!
- P is for **purpose**. How does God speak through this passage to look at my own life? How does the Holy Spirit use this Word to change me and give me a new purpose.

Third, doing some praying. You can say a TRIP prayer in which you tell God about what you thought about each of the four letters in "TRIP." And don't forget to pray for your preacher as they prepare to preach on the passage.

After you hear your preacher's sermon, you can take the same approach to what was preached as you did with the Bible passage beforehand. Do the whole "TRIP" process thinking about the sermon. Thanks. Regret. Intercession. And Purpose. You can do a TRIP prayer in response to a sermon, too. And remember to tell God thanks for your preacher.

When you do these kinds of things, preaching will begin to move from someone presenting information to a real conversation between preacher and hearer — and between God and you.