

Separating the signal from the noise: Living faith-fully in a 24/7 news world

Lutheran themes that can help us sort through the noise:

simul justis et peccata (we are both saint and sinner, as are all humans)

theology of the cross (God's strength found in weakness, God's victory under the cross, the hidden nature of God's work)

emphasis on daily life and vocation within it — Good News of God!

This means that:

we are called to pay attention to what goes on around us, but to question deeply the common certainties — particularly when people presume to know what God is doing

we should be especially mindful of the margins of our society, of those who are hurting and in need

we have each been uniquely gifted by God, and called by God, to serve our neighbor

With the news media:

before watching or listening or reading anything, pay attention to what you need to know and when and how you can best engage it

make a plan for “finding the signal in the noise” — don't just fall into what is around you but actively choose your news “diet”

remember to ask key media literacy questions — who wins, who loses? who's in, who's out? — and then turn them on their head, and pay attention to those on the “bottom”

remember that there is very little real news that can not wait — 24/7 news channels have a huge “noise to signal” ratio — very little news, lots and lots of noise; print media — especially weekly or monthly journals — can provide more background and context than tv or radio can; the web hosts all sorts of useful sites

pray with the news! remind yourself to listen and look actively for places where people are hurting, where power is overturned, where you can help your neighbor

For example:

30 minutes a day of news gathering could mean:

- 10 minutes reading/praying your local newspaper
- 10 minutes glancing at web headlines (NYTimes, LATimes, Guardian)
- 10 minutes of alternative news sources

60 minutes a day of news gathering could mean:

- 10 minutes reading/praying your local newspaper
- 10 minutes of touching base with various international papers on the web
- 10 minutes of time with bathroom magazines, weekly papers, alternatives
- 30 minutes of radio while cooking meals

90 minutes a day of news gathering could mean:

- 10 minutes reading/praying your local newspaper
- 10 minutes of touching base with various international papers on the web
- 10 minutes of time with bathroom magazines, weekly papers, alternatives
- 30 minutes of radio while cooking meals
- 30 minutes of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*

In each of these daily “news diets” there is local news in print, there is some basic national/international news on the web, there is “immediate” news via radio, and then there are a variety of alternative sources.

There are also clear ways in which these practices are woven into a daily routine, and always contextualized that way.

Think about your day – where can you “layer” in news? What kinds of news can you act on? What kinds of news are you turning to for entertainment or social uses? What do you need to know to “stay current” with your friends and neighbors? What kinds of news can you bring to them?

for more information, check out:

http://www.luthersem.edu/mhess/web/24_7_News.html

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