

The Transfiguration of our Lord
February 27, 2022
“Hear Him!” (Luke 9:35)
By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text for this Sunday, the Transfiguration of our Lord is from our Gospel reading, Luke 9:35.

“And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!”

Here ends our text.

Peter, James and John had been invited by Jesus to climb a mountain with Him in order to pray. It was on the mountain top that Jesus’ was transfigured in His appearance as He was praying. Matthew, Mark and Luke all report this momentous occasion. Matthew says that Jesus’ face shown like the sun and His clothes became white as the light.

In Mark 9 we read, **“His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.”**

And in today’s Gospel in Luke, we heard **“As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening.”**

This time of prayer to God the Father in heaven had now become a time to realize that the Son of Man who had physically trekked up the mountain with them was also the Son of God. They were again reminded, as they were during other of Jesus’ miracles, that they were in the presence of God in the flesh!

And they were afraid. Yes, Mark mentions this detail that caused Peter to just start talking nonsense about building three tabernacles, because he didn’t know what to say.

“He didn’t know what to say.” Fear moved Peter to become chatterbox. Abraham Lincoln once said, "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt."

Mahatma Gandhi once offered this advice, "Speak only if it improves upon the silence."

Yes, the disciples had fallen asleep after their mountain climb as Luke points out. And they were slowly waking up to the sound of voices. They heard and saw Moses and Elijah speaking with Jesus.

Peter wanted to join the conversation. But Peter's tabernacle building idea was interrupted. He was cut off by another voice. This voice came from a cloud that enveloped them. It was the voice of God the Father, to whom they had been praying.

Peter's voice needed to be quiet and everyone needed to listen to God. And the Father's message was simple and to the point. "Listen to Him". Listen to Jesus the Son of God.

Yes, Jesus words are words of eternal life. And God the Father, as Matthew we hear in full detail, says **“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”**

These words remind us of Jesus' baptism when the Father spoke these same words. (Matthew 3:17)

The Father is well pleased with His Son because He is doing His will to save the world by His death and resurrection. This is precisely what Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus about as Luke relates – His departure through His death on the cross. Jesus' time to redeem the world was near. His perfect obedience of keeping the Law given to Moses would please the Father on behalf of all people. Jesus was the perfect Lamb sacrificed on the cross for the sins of the world.

This pleased the Father! For God wants all people to be saved and it could only be accomplished through His Son. This is the Gospel message which pleases our sinful souls with its message of peace and reconciliation. Oh, it needs to be heard! And the Father made sure it was heard by interrupting Peter's chatter.

Listen to Him. Why would the Father repeat Himself on this mountain. Had not the disciples been listening to Jesus throughout His ministry? Didn't we just hear His sermon on another mountainside the last two Sundays? Did not Jesus just say right before going up this mountain of Transfiguration that He would die and rise again?

Listen to Jesus words just a few verses earlier in Luke 9.

“21 And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, 22 saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”

Why does the Father need to repeat again to the disciples that they need to listen to Him?

Because we, like the disciples are weak and sinful. Our hearts need to be lifted up often by Jesus’ comforting word of the Good News.

And we see that when the cloud was lifted and the Father stopped talking, only Jesus remained. His words have life. Moses nor Elijah are the Messiah, but the One who remained.

In John 12, Jesus tells us that He speaks the exact words that the Father speaks for they are words of eternal life. He and the Father are one.

“I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. 47 And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. 50 And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”

So when the disciples heard the voice from the cloud, what was their reaction? They were fearful – greatly afraid Matthew said. And that’s the reason why we need to hear Jesus’ voice over and over again. For we are sinners and cower like the disciples in the majestic presence of the Holy One. This was Isaiah’s reaction in his vision. I am a man of unclean lips. This was Peter’s reaction after the great catch of fish which we just heard of in Luke 5. Depart from me for I am a sinner!

Peter said.

But, what did Jesus say to Peter in the boat? Listen to Him. Do not be afraid. The Son of God tells Peter not to be afraid. And Jesus comes to His disciples on the mountain top and tells them the same words.

“Arise, and do not be afraid.” 8 When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

Jesus comes to us. We don't dare approach Him. But He comes with His words that take away all fear – His words of forgiveness. Listen to Him.

Are we a fearful people? Do the constant changes in our lives throw us off balance? Yes, we like Peter become chatterboxes. We talk and we talk when we are distressed.

Did you know that phone calls have made a comeback?

Yes, they've made a comeback in the pandemic. While the nation's biggest telecommunications providers prepared for a huge shift toward more internet use from home, what they didn't expect was an even greater surge in plain old voice calls, a medium that had been going out of fashion for years.

Verizon said it was now handling an average of 800 million wireless calls a day during the week, more than double the number made on Mother's Day, historically one of the busiest call days of the year. Verizon added that the length of voice calls was up 33 percent from an average day before the outbreak.

One woman said, “We started with the recipe, then talked about my younger brother, then my work, then her day, and next thing I knew, the soup was done,” “I needed to hear the familiarity of her voice.” Some have said that the simple voice call is the new killer app.

We want to “hear” what gives us comfort during a crisis. So, we reach out to familiar voices. Yet, simple chatter doesn't give soul comfort. “Listen to Him”, the Father says for soul comfort. Jesus is the familiar voice of our Good Shepherd!

In addition to the increased phone calls, 18.7 billion texts are sent worldwide every day. Mobile users in the United States sent 2.2 trillion text messages during 2020, up from 1.5 trillion messages in 2017.

And then there are other social medium like Twitter. Every second, on average, around 6,000 tweets are tweeted on Twitter, which corresponds to over 350,000 tweets sent per minute, 500 million tweets per day and around 200 billion tweets per year.

Yes, we're chatty people. We're Peters when we're uncomfortable or afraid. But, at all times we are thankful that the Father reminds us over and over again to "hear Him." There is much talk in this world, but only Jesus' talk saves the soul.

Jesus told His disciples over and over again that He would have to die and then would rise again after three days. Yet, there were the disciples in fear on Easter morn. The women went to look for and anoint a dead body. Hear Him! Jesus had told them that He would rise again. And He tells us over and over again that He has risen and has won the victory over sin, death and the devil.

So, we heard last week from 1 Corinthians 15.

"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

Moses didn't remain after the cloud was gone. Only Jesus. For Jesus didn't come to be a new lawgiver. He didn't come to be a new Moses. But He came to take away the sting of the death.

"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)

Where is your sting, O death? NOWHERE! Nowhere to be found! For Jesus went down from the mountain of Transfiguration and went to the cross for the salvation of the world. What awaits those who listen to Him? Our transformation. So, we heard last Sunday and we hear again, for we can never hear this too often!

1 John 3:2 " Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

And again, hear God's word in Philippians 3:21.

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

As we await our transformation, God calls each of us to be chatterboxes of His Good News. As soon as Jesus came down from the mountain, He sent out the 70 in the next chapter to announce that the Kingdom of God is near! With the Good News that we have heard through His word, we also go forth and tell of Jesus death and Resurrection! In this way God makes His home in the tabernacle of people's hearts and builds His holy house, the people of God! (Hebrews 3:4-6)
Blessed day of the Transfiguration of our Lord! Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)