

“Wait for ALL the Facts”

Given the times we live in, anyone with a cell phone can snap a picture, shoot a video, write a short blurb, and then hit “post” or “publish,” *instantly* uploading all that information to the Internet for all the world to digest. Thanks to this technology, we now have the ability to know the *very moment* something has happened. In fact, we can now bear witness to things *while they’re still playing out*. As amazing and wonderful as this technology may be, *there are some definite downsides and dangers to such “real time reporting.”* For one, things can get shared/reported on before they ought to be shared/reported on. *We’re posting/reporting, even though all the facts aren’t in yet.* Do you think that can cause problems? *Duh!!!* When all the facts aren’t in yet, what ends up being reported—almost always—is wrong information, plain and simple. And once this happens, the damage is done. You can’t un-ring a bell. The initial “shock report/breaking news!” is the only thing that people will remember, even if it is lacking “all the facts” (or any facts, for that matter). Later corrections, if they come at all, often don’t change the opinion that was formed based on the initial report.

Look: I know it’s not our human nature, especially in this day and age that has become so accustomed to having instant access to all matters of *information in the palm of our hands*, but like it or not, there are times when we need to be patient and wait for *all* the facts to come in. We need to wait until *everything* has played itself out before we go running our mouths. There are times when we need to open our eyes and ears to what is still unfolding... and keep our mouths shut until *everything* has been unfolded and revealed; until *all* the facts are in and settled. (How different would our world, our nation, and even our own individual lives be if we simply did this. No, that’s not a question! That’s a statement of fact! Our lives would, no doubt, be very different if we were just patient and waited for all the facts; listening more and talking less until all the facts were known.)

Here’s where I’m going with all this. As we turn our attention to the Gospel lesson today—the account of the Transfiguration of Jesus—we hear Jesus giving a very explicit command to Peter, James, and John to do just that: *“keep your mouths shut.”* This raises the obvious question: *Why?* Why does Jesus command His three most-trusted disciples to not say a word to anyone about the great and glorious things they just bore witness to? Wouldn’t something as amazing and miraculous as this divine mountaintop experience be news that should immediately be shared with anyone and everyone? *“Here’s the answer to our prayers! Everything we’ve been looking for is happening, right here on this mountaintop!”*

Folks: The answer to the question of silence is right there in the rest of Christ’s command. *“Tell no one until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.”* I

want you to think about that for a moment. Jesus isn't saying here, "*don't ever tell anyone at all.*" He's just saying, "***Wait. The rest of the events still need to play out. There is more to this story than just this earthly mountaintop glory!***" That's true too, isn't it? We know how the rest of the story plays out. There's still a very ugly, but necessary crucifixion that needs to take place. The transfiguration mountaintop isn't the last stop. There's still Golgotha. There's still the resurrection. There's still the Ascension mountaintop. ***There's still a whole lotta story to go!*** Those three guys didn't know any of that though. They didn't understand; ***not yet, at least.*** The rest of man's salvation story still needed to play itself out. Standing atop that Transfiguration mount, they didn't have all the facts.

I want you to imagine the damage that could have resulted if Peter, James, and John ***immediately*** picked up their cell phones on that mountaintop and started tweeting and texting that the Messiah, in all His glory, was here along with Moses and Elijah. Believe it or not, in terms of laying the foundation of faith, ***it would've been horrendous!*** People would've flocked from all over to get a piece of that mountaintop glory. "*Here we go! Let the revolution begin! I'm gonna ride 'Team Jesus' all the way to easy street!*" All that radiance and magnificence and glory... ***who wouldn't want a piece of that action?*** You already know the rest of the story though. All that radiance and magnificence and glory was going to necessarily give way to the brutal betrayal and arrest of Maundy Thursday and the darkness and utter "defeat" of Good Friday (defeat from their perspective, at least). **It had to.** ***Without the cross, there is no salvation. No hope. No victory. No true and eternal glory.*** Had those chuckleheads started tweeting and texting and running their mouths ***before*** all the facts had come out, all those hopes and dreams of all those people, built upon half a story and not all the facts, would be dashed when the rest of the story ***necessarily*** played itself out in bloody, traumatic fashion.

Truth be told, I think all of us here can understand the hurt and the damage I speak of. We're Christians! And yet... when things don't shake out the way we want or expect, ***our faith can suffer some damage.*** You know as well as I do that when things come up a bit short of expectations (or completely blow up in our face), especially after you pray, it can make you bitter. ***It can make you doubtful and jaded and untrusting.*** As Christians we all know that we're supposed to bear crosses, but when we actually have to bear a cross?! "*What gives?! You've got the wrong guy! I don't deserve this!*" We look for glory, not just in terms of what's to come in heaven, but in the here-and-now. We even ***expect*** a certain amount of glory in our daily lives here-and-now because after all, we're good Christians, right? (At least better than *those* people). Aren't we entitled to a little glory and ease? I mean... look at all that we do! Doesn't that count for ***something?*** So yeah... there are times in our lives that we do look for glory. We expect to find glory and ease of life and rewards and praise, and ***instead we find only a cross.*** **Oh... the damage those crosses can cause in our daily lives!**

Here's the deal; here's what all this means for us today: ***You do know the rest of the story that those three guys standing atop that mountain didn't know at the time!*** By the grace of God, through the working of His Holy Spirit in faith, **you have all the facts!** You know that Christ the Lord suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. You know the necessity of it all. You know that Good Friday wasn't the end of the story. You know that He also descended into hell to declare victory over sin, death, and the devil. You know that He rose again from the dead on the third day; that He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty in eternal, supreme victory. You also know that He will come again in all glory. You know, through faith, that this is nothing to fear or dread. "*Come, Lord Jesus!*" You know what all this means. ***By grace, through faith, you have all the facts.***

And all those facts necessarily include what's taking place in our lives today and always, until the end of the age. "*This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him!*" Well... what does He tell us? He gives us all the facts we ***need*** to have/know His peace that surpasses all understanding, right now... even as we suffer. "*I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*" Our Lord continues to give us a heavenly glimpse of His almighty and divine love for us ***by pointing us to His ongoing presence among us—His Word and His Sacraments—the great “foretaste of the feast to come.”***

Think on this. When our Lord was transfigured, He was giving those three disciples ***a glimpse at the rest of the story.*** You see, He knew how their weak faith would be damaged by the traumatic events of His impending Passion. This is why the Almighty gave them this loving glimpse of glory. He was giving them a ***sneak-peek at the end*** of the salvation story. All the blood and sorrow and brutality that was about to happen in the weeks to come was ***actually part of the plan. It wasn't an accident.*** God's plans hadn't blown up in their faces. **The cross was the plan!** "*This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him. In spite of what you will see in the weeks to come as My beloved Son is betrayed, brutalized, and murdered, He is My beloved Son. I am well-pleased with Him. Do not be deceived!*"

Folks: In a very real way, this is exactly what God is doing for you this very morning, though He doesn't rend the heavens and scare us out of our wits like He did with those three thick-skulled disciples who didn't know the rest of the salvation story like you and I do. Your Lord and Savior continues to manifest and reveal and hold out to you His absolutely free and blood-bought gifts of eternal life, complete forgiveness, and everlasting salvation. Here is Christ. ***Here is the peace that surpasses all understanding, even here in the midst of suffering; even as you suffer; even as you make your way through this shadowy valley of death.*** Do not be deceived. Do not lose hope. Dearly beloved by God: Here on this little mountaintop that is God's Church; here is where God comes to us and dwells with us. Here is His beloved Son, with whom He is well-pleased.

May God grant you, in the remaining days you have left to run this race called “life,” the ***patient humility of faith*** to see and hear and hold fast to the whole story of His almighty and ongoing presence in your daily life. May He also grant you the same saving faith that not only recognizes and trusts in ***all the facts of God’s ongoing love for you in Christ***, but also the wisdom that understands that things are different on this side of the cross/tomb; faith that doesn’t lose hope or drop the reins and run like a Chicken Little when times get tough or don’t go according to your own plans. May He grant you the faith that goes out into your daily lives and vocations, freely and boldly telling the world about ***the glorious fact that it is finished, in Christ and because of Christ***; the glorious fact that is Christ crucified and resurrected for you and for all mankind; the glorious fact that this same almighty and victorious Christ abides with us even now in mercy, in grace, and in a love and peace that surpasses all understanding and knows no bounds.

May all these Christ-centered facts be your praise, your glory, and your peace, and may they be in your hearts and on your lips, now and into all eternity...

AMEN