

Sermon for March 3, 2019 – Transfiguration Sunday

Luke 9:28-36 (NIV84)

Theme: Listen to Jesus.

- 1) *He is the revealed glory of God*
- 2) *He is the focal point of all Scripture*
- 3) *He is our future Hope*
- 4) *He is the Savior God chose.*

²⁸ About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. ²⁹ As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ³⁰ Two men, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. ³² Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. ³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) ³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

I want to tell you a little story about poor listening and false expectations: My 2nd grade teacher offered my class the following riddle to think about over a weekend. "Next week," she said, "we are going to do a science experiment: we are going to make edible explosions." Now, my seven-year-old mind focused more on the "explosion" part of her riddle than the "edible". Over the weekend I imagined every type of explosion I could think of - from firecrackers to thermonuclear bombs! I was pretty certain my teacher would not be allowed to detonate a "nuclear bomb" in the school, but a boy can dream, can't he?

Needless to say, I had high expectations. You can just imagine how let down I felt when the experiment was nothing more than making "popcorn" - edible explosions.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: when it comes to God's Word, I think that we are all tempted to act like 7 year old me. God promises to bless us – and we are right to hold on to his promises in faith. The problem is that, instead of carefully listening to what God's Word actually says about the blessings he offers, we let our imaginations run wild - convincing ourselves that his promise to bless us means that He will take all our earthly problems away; allowing us to live an easy, trouble-free life.

But are these the blessings God promises to give us? No, they aren't. And it's only when we listen carefully to God's Word that we find comfort in the true blessings he offers: forgiveness, life and eternal salvation all coming from and through Jesus.

Therefore, with Luke's account of Jesus' transfiguration as our guide, let us be encouraged to **Listen to Jesus**. Why? Because: *1) He is the revealed glory of God, 2) He is the focal point of all Scripture, 3) He is our future hope, 4) He is the Savior God chose.*

Part One: He is the revealed glory of God

Our sermon text takes place approximately 8 days after Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ – the very Son of God.¹ Sadly, the disciples had preconceived notions of what that confession meant. They imagined Jesus as someone who would reestablish David's earthly kingdom and rule the world in a political kind of way. When Jesus tried to correct his disciples by telling them about his coming suffering, death and resurrection, they refused to listen. Peter even rebuked Jesus for saying such things.

Jesus knew that the disciples needed to have a correct understanding of who he is and what he came to do in order for them to be his apostles. Perhaps this is why he chose three of them to accompany him on a little prayer retreat: so that they might know his true identity and mission.

We read: [Jesus] *took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.*²⁹ *As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.*

Do you know what a geode is? It's an ordinary looking rock which, when you open it, contains dazzling, colorful crystals. Even though we might know that an unopened geode is a geode, it's hard for us to conceive of the beauty inside that rock until it is revealed.

In a certain way, Jesus is like a geode. Even though the disciples knew that Jesus was more than just a mere man, they couldn't really conceive of who he was without seeing his glory. This is why, even though Peter confessed him to be the Messiah, he still treated Jesus as a mere human teacher when he rebuked him for talking about his impending suffering and death.

But Jesus was not a mere human teacher; he is God the Son who, for our sake, kept his glory hidden throughout his earthly life. Peter needed to know this so that he would stop "imagining" and start listening to Jesus' explanation of what kind of Savior he is. This is why Jesus allowed his glory to shine.

How often aren't we like Peter who, just 8 days before this account, tried to tell Jesus what he should and should not do. When trials and trouble come our way, we are often tempted to complain and wonder why God isn't keeping his promise to "bless" us. "Lord, this is not how it should be. I am your child. Following you should improve my life, not make it worse." Like Peter, we often look for earthly ease and glory instead of the spiritual blessings God promises us in His Word.

And when things don't go the way we think they should go, we grumble - which, when you think about it, is really an attempt to rebuke God for what he does.

This, then, is one reason why Jesus had his glorious transfiguration recorded for us in Scripture: he wants us to know that He is not merely a great teacher whom we can choose to agree or disagree with. No, Jesus is the all-glorious Son of God: perfect in righteousness and almighty in power. See his divine glory and be silent. Stop dictating your life to him. Listen to his plans for your salvation.

Part Two: Jesus is the focal point of all Scripture

Two men, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

Why did Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus? Many believe that Moses was to represent the Law and Elijah the Prophets. "The Law and the Prophets" was a popular term in Jesus' day, used to refer to the Scriptures.

So what does the sight of these two men speaking to Jesus about his departure signify? That all Scripture centers on Jesus - pointing to his once for all sacrifice for our sins.

Peter and the rest of the disciples found it difficult to listen to Jesus talk about his departure. They wanted to put it out of their minds. But Jesus' needed them to know the importance of his crucifixion that they might not fall away on account of it. He needed them to understand that his sacrifice for sin is the whole reason why he came.

This is why he allowed them to see Moses and Elijah in deep conversation with him about his departure. These prophets did not try to dissuade Jesus from going to his cross like the disciples did, but listened to what was about to happen and rejoiced in his work.

Many people today treat the Bible as if it's merely a rule book to life that we should read to solve our earthly problems; and we are often tempted to treat it similarly. But the Scriptures were not written to tell me how to be successful or live a good life. The Bible was written to point me to Jesus – that I might know Him as my LORD and Savior from sin. Jesus once said: *You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.*ⁱⁱ The whole purpose of the Bible, therefore, is to lead me to repent of my sin so that, through faith in Jesus' forgiving love for me, I might have the hope of eternal life with him in paradise.

Part Three: Jesus is our future hope.

³² *Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.* ³³ *As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)*

Jesus' transfiguration had its desired effect on Peter, James and John. They were so awestruck with Jesus' glory that they wanted to bask in it forever. They were, quite literally, experiencing heaven on earth!

But, as wonderful as the experience was, it was only a sample - a divine appetizer of the great eternal feast that is yet to come. Jesus still needed to prepare this feast, and the only way he could do that was through the sacrifice of himself on the cross. If the disciples kept their eyes and ears on Jesus, they would learn how and when this glorious sacrifice would save them.

What can we learn from this little glimpse of glory – recorded for us in Scripture? That our true joy is not found in the things of this earth. Our true joy is found in the place every Christian desires to be: at our Savior's side in heaven.

This is why we need to listen to Jesus – paying careful attention to every word He speaks to us in Scripture. Jesus is our only way to heavenⁱⁱⁱ. Sure, life on this earth may seem great at times – something we want to hold on to. But as great as this world may seem, it is not our true home. Listen to what Jesus says: *Do not love the world or anything in the world. . . The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*^{iv} And what is God's will? *To believe in the one he has sent.*^v

Yes, listen to Jesus tell you about your future hope. And why should you believe him? Because, as we will see next, he is the Savior God chose.

Part Four: He is the Savior God chose.

To impress upon Peter, James and John – and all who would read this account – the importance of listening to every word Jesus says, God the Father made an appearance.

*While [Peter] was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.*³⁵ *A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."*

The cloud that appeared over the disciples was the same majestic cloud that protected the Israelites on their 40 year journey from Egypt to Canaan and terrified them at Mount Sinai when God spoke his commandments from it. It is called "the Glory of the LORD" and whenever it appears in Scripture, the all-holy, Almighty LORD himself is present.

God the Father wanted Peter, James and John to know for certain that Jesus is the Christ - the chosen Savior to whom the whole Bible points. Even though Jesus' appearance was like that of any man, he is God the Son. Therefore God the Father says: "Listen to Him" – that is to say: Don't talk back to him. Don't argue, complain or try to change what he says. "Listen to Him." Take every opportunity to carefully hear what he says and hold it as your highest treasure – as if nothing in all the world mattered compare to it; because, truth be told, nothing else does!

And then, in a flash, the glimpse of Jesus' divine glory was gone. He stood alone before the three disciples – approachable and altogether human. Eight days earlier they had confessed him as the Christ. Now they began to comprehend what that confession meant - and so do we! Now their hearts and minds were more inclined to treat him – not as an equal, but as the divine Savior He truly is. No, they still didn't understand everything Jesus said about his work, but they listened and, when Jesus work was finished, recalled what Jesus said and believed.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: Like the disciples, we might not understand everything Jesus tells us in His Word, but if we listen carefully to what He says, we will nevertheless grow in faith, love and hope.

So, when it comes to the Bible, don't be like seven- year-old me who only paid attention to half of the riddle his teacher told him. Be careful to listen to everything Jesus tells you. Why? Because *He is the revealed glory of God. He is the focal point of all Scripture. He is our future Hope. He is the Savior God chose. Amen.*

ⁱ Cf. Matthew 16:16

ⁱⁱ John 5:39 NIV84

ⁱⁱⁱ John 14:6

^{iv} 1 John 2:15-17 NIV84

^v John 6:29 NIV84