

Listen to Him!

Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord - Luke 9:28-36

preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson, February 10, 2013

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set it on fire with love for thee. Amen.

I am immensely proud of my two sons. At 25 and 27, they've turned out to be pretty good young men. But I remember back when they were, oh, 8 and 10 they acted pretty much like 8- and 10-year-old boys always do. That is to say, they moved *very* quickly, they were almost always loud, and they often had less attention span than a gnat. Mind you, I never thought there was a whole lot wrong with that. When your main task in life is to suck up just about as much information as you can, you've got to be quick about it. When your second most important task is the sharing of that information, you end up being loud. And when all that good stuff is vying for prominence inside a space the size of a good cantaloupe, I guess it's just natural that keeping it straight becomes difficult. I understand that all that is normal, but it sometimes got a little frustrating. There were times when the high decibel babble of World Cup winners and baseball ERA's, of birthdays and bruises and bicycle chains was near *constant*, and I just had to break in there somewhere to give out some information of my own. Truth be told, they were pretty good kids, but sometimes the movement was *so* quick, the din was *so* loud, the confusion level was *so* high, that I had to whistle or shout <whistle> "Boys!" just to get them to stop long enough to listen to what I needed to tell them.

That's what happened to the disciples in this morning's Gospel lesson. In the middle of everything else that was going on; in the middle of all the healings, the news about John the Baptist, the feeding of the five thousand, the mission trip into the countryside, God got their attention.

It had been a rough week or so by the time Jesus took the disciples up the mountain to pray. A lot had been going on, a lot had been coming in, and the disciples were busy trying to process it all. They were tired, so while Jesus prayed, they were dozing off. Then all of a sudden, there before them stood their teacher and friend, but changed in such a way that his face glowed, and his clothes were dazzling white. And there with him were Moses and Elijah. Luke doesn't say how they *knew* that's who they were, but there they were – the twin pillars of the Hebrew tradition. There on one side of Jesus was Moses, the giver of God's law. And on the other side stood Elijah, the very epitome of prophecy; a prophet's prophet, if ever there was one.

The disciples were definitely awake now! But their first response was to throw this new event into the mix of what was already going on. Their first response was to chatter about and start *doing* things. It always amazes me that Peter always seems to grab the speaking part in all these stories. Peter, the one who a week earlier had been the first to say aloud that Jesus was God's promised Messiah – we missed that lesson this time around because Lent's coming at us so quickly – Peter steps forward to propose a plan: "This is way cool," he says. "We can set up booths here for the three of you, and we can get the word out – we'll have to have a line – and maybe we can put up some flags and some bunting, and maybe..."

He might have gone on chattering and making plans all day, I suppose. But a voice from the cloud cut him off. <whistle> "Boys! "This is my son." "*Listen* to him!" "This is my son." "Listen to *him!*" The discussion was over. The plans were done. The other two were gone, and Jesus was left there as the singular focal point of the disciples' attention. "Listen to *him!*" the voice said. The Law and the Prophets, the backbone of the faith of the People of God, were gone – now to take second place to what *Jesus* had to say. "Listen to *him!*"

Little boys aren't the only ones these days that are busy and loud and scattered. Sometimes I think that Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is something that has become a part of our whole

society. We hustle through our days, busy to the point that we almost feel guilty if we slow down. In this rush to fill our days, we take in albums of images, reams of writing, gigabytes of data. In an age where the motto is often “Information is power,” we listen to *hundreds* of sources of information a day, maybe thousands. It bombards us from every direction, and we *have* to listen.

We listen when the government to the right and government to the left fight to define issues of education and decency and morals. But the Father says, “Listen to *him!*”

We listen in the workplace where productivity and performance are the primary values. But the voice says, “Listen to *him!*”

The television promises to bring pseudo-reality world right into your living room and mine. “Listen to *him!*”

The papers still promise us, “all the news that’s fit to print,” and Google and Yahoo and Facebook and Twitter us waaaay more than what’s fit. “Listen to *him!*”

The advertisers that drive pretty much everything we receive claim, “Buy this and you’re all set. Do that, and you can have it all.” “Listen to *him!*”

The preacher says that the end of the world is around the corner. The preacher says that you need to walk *their* walk and talk *their* talk if you want God to bless you with health and wealth. The preacher says that you need to wear your sin and guilt around like a well-worn coat or the devil will snatch you up and you’ll burn in eternal torment. But the voice from heaven still answers, “Listen to *him!*”

At best, these other voices are only secondary. At worst, they are just flat *wrong*. The message of the Transfiguration of our Lord is that there is one singular focal point for how we are to live our lives, that there *is* only one path that we are to follow, that there *is* only one voice to which we must listen – the voice of Jesus Christ. “Listen to *him!*”

It wasn’t easy for the disciples to listen to Jesus. What he had to say was not filled with sunny sayings or easy banter. The transfiguration comes at the *end* of Jesus’ miracle-working ministry in Galilee. Jesus has, in Luke’s words, “set his face to go to Jerusalem.” He has resolved to meet his fate head-on, to drink of the cup that he has been given. From this point on, Jesus’ talk, Jesus’ teaching, Jesus’ *preaching* is peppered with references to his coming passion and death. Listening to all this was not easy for the disciples. This wasn’t at all what they wanted to hear. But the voice of God says to them, “Listen to *him!*”

It’s not always easy for *us* to hear what Jesus is saying, either. What Jesus says to us doesn’t fit into our normal patterns for handling information. Like a puzzle piece that has the wrong shape to match any of the empty spaces that we have, what Jesus tells us sometimes fits about as well as the square peg in the round hole. It doesn’t *fit* when we read that a young woman is gunned down just for living her life in the “wrong” neighborhood, yet Jesus says, “Love your neighbor.” It doesn’t *fit* when we see the powerful held up as heroes when they push past others to get to the top, yet Jesus says, “If you would be first, you must be a servant”. It doesn’t *fit* when everything around us shouts that we should grab what we can, that we should think of our own desires and comforts because no one else will, yet Jesus says, “Seek *first* the Kingdom of God.” All too often, the grace and the mercy and the love of Christ seem to battle for our well-intentioned heart with the busy-ness and the self-centeredness and the *noise* of the culture in which we find ourselves. All too often, the message of Christ seems to be the wrong message for our busy lives. All too often, Christ seems to be just plain irrelevant to our time, to our culture, to our *sins*. But still the voice from heaven calls us, “Listen to *him!*”

When we do just that, when we begin to really *listen* to the call of Jesus Christ on the whole of our lives, when we let *his* words and *his* life and *his* love become part of what and who we are, gradually we begin to find that all sort of things change. Christ is still the wrong shape for the holes in our lives that have been formed and shaped by the broken world. But as we more and more orient ourselves to Christ, the puzzle *itself* begins to change. The blank spaces defined by all those other voices, become Christ-shaped instead. Our lives change shape to become Christ-*like* as we heed the Father’s voice. <whistle> “Boys!” “Listen to *him!*”