

## Written Copy: Mark 9:4-7 "Listen to Him"

Transfiguration Sunday

Sunday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### Text: Mark 9:4-7

<sup>4</sup> And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup> For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup> And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."

### Exegetical Statement

The setting is six days after Jesus rebuked Peter for standing against what was the Father's express will that Jesus suffer, die, and rise, and then explained to all who follow Him that they must give up their love of life in this world in order to have true life now and into eternity to come. He purposefully takes the three-inner core of the disciples: Peter, James, and John alone up onto a high mountain so that they will be alone with Him, and no other eyes watching. There the three disciples see Him transfigured into something more glorious than His normal appearance. His clothes shine forth with a radiance and brightness that is beyond the ability of any cloth manufacturer/cleaner to duplicate-impossibly white. Then Elijah and Moses appear, and they see these two Old Testament figures who represent the two main portions of the Scriptures: The Law and the Prophets, there with Jesus conferring with Him. All three are overwhelmed and terrified at what they see, the normal response of any human being standing in the presence of the LORD working in their presence. Peter, feeling he needs to say something blurts out, "Rabbi, it is most awesome that we are here to experience this with you! Shall we construct three temporary booths, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah, so we can hang out and have time of worship with each?" At this point the Father responds by His presence cloaked in the cloud that envelops them and His voice that says "This One, this is My Son, the One whom I love very much. You are to listen to Him!" At that Moses and Elijah are gone, and only Jesus is left, looking as He always had before. Following this they descend back down the mountain with Jesus giving the clear directive that they should speak of this event to no one until the Son of Man rises again from the dead.

### Focus Statement:

Jesus brought the reign and rule of God to earth which is truly present and at work around us and in us as His Body the Church. Even though we may not see it at work it is. He works most powerfully not in conquest but through His death and resurrection. His Word is the source of powerful work and change in the hearts and minds of all who hear and believe. His Word should be the norming influence on our thoughts and all other voices that vie for our attention.

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

Like the disciples we don't always "listen" to Jesus in the manner we should. We allow other voices to direct and guide our lives, voices from culture, as well as our own interpretation and understanding of how we should live our lives that is not always consistent with what Jesus tells us. We can forget that in Him resides the fullness of God, and that fullness is given to us in His Word and Sacraments.

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

In a world where so many voices vie for our attention we need to first and foremost hear Jesus words of Law and Gospel. We need to see ourselves first and foremost through what He has made us in our baptism: His precious children, who need to judge all other voices, and even our own thoughts, but what He has to say to us in Law and Gospel.

### Subject Sentence: Who are you listening to? It should be Him!

## **Introduction: Problems With Hearing**

It's no secret to many of you, I struggle sometimes to hear what others are saying. Now I'm not talking about the selective hearing that we all have. Men and women both tune out what their spouse says when an important moment in the plot of their favorite TV show or sports game comes on. Men do tend to exhibit this trait more than women, especially when watching our favorite sports. That's because for us every play can have significant importance, unless we're talking about last Sunday's disappointing Superbowl contest. The problem here with selective hearing is not caused by the volume being too low, it's that we are filtering out what we consider to be unimportant at the time.

Then are those communication problems we have with our spouse where it's not "filtering out", but a problem of distance. I saw a meme once upon a time that describes communication in the everyday life of married couples as consisting of each one shouting to the other from another room in the house: "What did you say?".

While both the filtering out and distance are both problems I experience, there is another problem I have, I can't hear well out of my left ear. So, when someone is wearing a mask, which by itself muffles the volume and clarity of their voice, then add to that the fact that many of us talk rather fast, while not clearly enunciate our words, and the combination makes it hard for me to understand what you are trying to tell me. So that what I hear sometimes can best be described as the voice of the teacher on the Charlie Brown cartoons: "Wah wah".

Then there is the problem of noise. In communication textbooks the term "noise" describes anything from the static that you hear on radio stations whose signal is weak, to other sounds which could be voices, or even music. These things are not necessarily muffled or unclear in themselves, but their presence keeps you from hearing clearly that which is most important for you to hear at the time. Noise is anything that takes your focus and attention away from the message that is trying to be communicated to you. Think about what it's like to sit in a crowded room where there are so many different conversations going on around you. Have you ever struggled to focus on any one single conversation or voice? Do they all at some point begin to sound like one indefinite roar, like the sound of a waterfall?

How many different voices and conversations are vying for our attention today? The voices of both sides of the political spectrum regarding which party is the good guy and which party is the bad guy, voices supporting or denouncing the continued political and social unrest in our society, voices of concern over the Pandemic, as well as voices that claim it's all a hoax. Voices mandating masks and social distancing as the answer to the threat of the Virus, vs. voices alleging Government control over our freedoms. There are voices that uphold the need and desire for the vaccine, versus voices that warn of dangers regarding

the vaccine. Even the voices of the news media that are supposed to report the facts concerning what was going on in the world now go beyond that function seeking to manipulate you by using rhetoric. Rhetoric uses words and phrases that aims to hit you emotionally as well as intellectually. It's used to get you fired up so that you are moved to support one side or the other not based on facts, but based on love or anger, guilt or pride their rhetoric elicits in you. Both sides of the political spectrum use it as well as the news media to bring you on board with whatever their agenda might be. With all these things coming at us, all this noise, it's hard to concentrate on what we really need to hear. And whose voice is it that are we really missing? How about the voice of the LORD?

## **The Voices and Rhetoric that Obscured God's Message**

The problem of noise obscuring our focus on the truth of God's Word is nothing new. We can see it at work on Jesus' Disciples in our Gospel Lesson.

To understand this let's take a look at the context of this Lesson. We are told the Transfiguration happens "six days later". What happened six days before this? In Mark's Gospel it was Jesus rebuke of Peter in **Mark 8:33** <sup>33</sup> **But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."** Jesus is saying this to the disciple who not too long before this gave the cornerstone confession of the Church **Matthew 16:16** **Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."** Afterwards Jesus proceeds to fill in the blanks on what this confession meant. Being the Christ, the Son of the Living God meant (**Mark 8:31**) **And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.** Jesus teaching is clear as day here. But it was just so much noise to Peter. It spoke against what Peter had been taught and had come to believe by the present-day Jewish culture about what the Messiah would come to do. Jesus must be wrong. So he attempted to set Jesus straight on what Peter thought he knew was truth. And it wasn't just Peter who thought Jesus prophetic words about what would happen to Him in Jerusalem were so much noise, the other 11 were in the same boat.

Jesus speaks to all of them concerning what His being the Christ, the Son of the Living God should mean to them, these who are called to be in His Church that is founded on this confession. **Mark 8:34-36** <sup>34</sup> **And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. <sup>36</sup> For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?"** But none of this is what the disciples wanted to hear as their call to walk in faith. They don't want to hear that it means they give up their plans, and desire to make the kingdom Jesus brings be set up in this world, where they can keep all the stuff they love in their hands. They want Jesus to be the Messiah king who makes Palestine His kingdom in the present age, to remove the Romans and bring His reign and

rule to bear as an earthly kingdom centered in Jerusalem. A kingdom where they don't have to forfeit or give up anything, but instead keep everything and gain power and glory as they stand as princes who have been given power to rule underneath Him.

Even after Jesus teaches them about the truth of living as His followers, as His disciples, it is still just so much noise to them. For many of us, who live our lives surrounded and immersed in the things of the world, the true meaning of these words of Jesus become so much background noise too. Like the Disciples, we need a reset on what is most important, on whose voice needs to be tuned in while the voices of culture around us are tuned out. And for us, as well as the Disciples, that reset comes on the Mount of Transfiguration.

## **The Father's Clear Message Concerning the Son: "Listen to Him"**

On that mountain they see Jesus appear in a way that He has never appeared before. He was transfigured. His appearance was altered in a manner that brought fear and confusion to His Disciples. Here was Jesus, whom they had walked with, ate with, slept and beside. This was the Jesus who certainly had done mighty miracles that displayed the power of God. But they always saw Him as a man, a man who had been given extraordinary power and authority by God, but still only a man. After all He looked like any other ordinary man. But not so anymore. They were given a glimpse of the true reality that lay underneath His humanity. They saw that while He was completely human in all the fullness of humanity, below that lay the complete Divinity that belongs only to God Almighty. It had been there all along, covered up, cloaked by His humanity. And in that moment when He was transfigured Jesus pulled back the cover so they could see something truly amazing, supernatural, and out of this world. Mark describes this vision as **(Mark 9:3) "and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them."** The whiteness and radiance of His clothes is being emphasized here, so that one could say they radiated whiteness and brightness to the max!

This is a brilliance that could not be duplicated by any clothing manufacturer either then or now. Matthew's Gospel describes Jesus face radiating brightness in a similar manner. This brightness is not the reflected brightness we might like the light of the movie projector reflecting off the movie screen, it's more like looking directly into the light shining from the projector itself. It's like looking directly at the sun in the sky and the brightness it emanates. What the disciples were to understand as well as we here today was that looking at Jesus meant seeing God Himself.

But that's not all they see. The two premiere figures of the past, Moses and Elijah appear with Him. Moses, from whom comes the first major component of the Old Testament Scriptures: The Law. And Elijah, the premiere prophet who represents the prophetic words that make up another major component of Old Testament Scripture. They both stand there, not just as a vision, but are really there talking with Jesus. What does this mean for Peter? In his confused babbling we can still understand how greatly this impressed him. **Mark 9:5**

**And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."** He is saying "Hey Jesus! It is so awesome that we are here with you to see this! How about we make three temporary shelters or tabernacles, one for you of course, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!" What is behind this weird request? Peter doesn't want this to end. He wants a chance to talk with Moses and Elijah and hear what they have to say. But that's not why they have come. They are there to impress upon Peter and the others that the Disciples already have someone greater to listen to.

Just when Peter expresses his desire to have a one on one with Moses and Elijah (**Mark 9:7**) **And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."** The overshadowing cloud was the real presence of God the Father descending down among them, His glory and power cloaked and hidden by the cloud in the same manner that He had done when He came among His people in the Wilderness Wanderings. And from that cloud comes the testimony of God the Father for the Disciples, as well as for you and me here today, along with all of mankind. ***"This One, this one standing before for you, and not Moses or Elijah, this is my Beloved Son. This is the One who in all He says and does pleases me and who obeys me perfectly. You are to listen to Him!"*** The Father is saying "Tune out all the voices that you've heard from the religious experts and teachers of the day on who the Messiah should be. Tune out your own sinful selfish ideas about what His reign and rule should be. Moses and Elijah stand in service and agreement with Him. Listen to His voice and through Him understand who God is and what His reign and rule among men means to you.

And what should Jesus reign and rule mean to them and to us? The reign and rule of God, His powerful dealing with humanity, can most clearly be seen in Jesus humble obedience to the Father's plan of salvation. We see the mighty ruling power of God in a way the world cannot understand. We see it in His suffering and dying to remove the sins from every single human life, in His suffering in your place so that by faith you are declared to have nothing standing in offense toward God. Jesus showed Himself to be reigning as God Almighty by taking your place and the suffering you were due so you could be declared in right standing with God, despite your continued sin, despite your continued tuning out of God's voice in favor of the voices of culture and of your own heart. While you and I continue to put too much emphasis on these other voices, the reign and rule of God in Christ Jesus overpowers the condemnation that the devil wants them to be in our lives. Every time we listen to them and ignore our Savior's voice, His Spirit is there speaking into our ear and our heart through the Scriptures to turn our attention back to Him. To bring our faith and trust once again to find its sole source in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

## **Are You Listening To Him?**

God's clear message and command to you this day is "Listen to Him". So the question must be asked, "Are You? How often are you listening to Him? How often are you letting the other voices that inundate you, along with the voice of your own sinful heart, drowned out His voice?" Stop for a moment and consider the signs that this is true in your life. Consider the level of fear and angst you feel right now with all that is going on in the world and in your life. Examine how often you allow the voices of the world be your focus compared to how much time you spend studying His Word in private meditation, as well as in small group Bible Study. Now I admit I don't know the ins and outs of your private life or your personal meditative time in God's Word. I can only judge on the participation of our congregation in the group Bible Studies hosted here at Church. But if they are any indication it means that the vast majority of members here are more focused more on what the world has to say, than what God's Spirit wants to teach you in His Word. Even with COVID-19 preventing some from meeting in person, there are a good number who have the ability to connect with over the internet on a regular basis for one hour on Sunday, and yet choose not to use the same technology to connect with His Word during the week.

Now please hear me: I am so thankful to have each and every one of you who are streaming this service and regularly join with us in Sunday Morning worship. Please don't stop. Please continue to join us. But along with Sunday morning try setting aside time during the week to study His Word and hear His voice in private meditation on Scripture, as well as in some kind of group setting, whether it be with us here in person, or on Zoom, or with other Christian friends. Let Jesus' Spirit speak to you in a way that goes beyond what I can accomplish in one sermon on a Sunday morning. Seek for a way to give Him more than just one hour's worth of worship during the week. If you can't Zoom our Bible Studies live, try watching on our YouTube Channel. If you can't figure these things out on your own call the Church Office and we can help walk you through it. We can even burn the Bible Studies to a DVD and send them to you, all you have to do is ask. Beginning this week we offer an additional worship service on Wednesday Evenings at 7:00 PM. This is not intended to replace Sunday worship, but to be an additional opportunity for the LORD to speak into your life during the season of Lent. So many different ways to "Listen to Him". Will you take the initiative to make it happen?

## **Conclusion**

We all struggle against the noise and the rhetoric going on around us to really hear each other, and even more importantly to hear the voice of our Lord and Savior above the voices of culture. We struggle to give Him the time and attention He deserves. But when we do, He doesn't yell at us or condemn us to hell. He speaks to us through His Word, through this sermon you are hearing this very day. He gently and lovingly calls you to come back and listen to Him. He is telling you that despite your sin He loves you so very much. He wants to spend time with you as you to spend time in His Word. Through that time He wants to impress upon you His great and never-ending love for you. He wants to cleanse you of the sin and guilt that lays in your heart so you can live in His love. He wants to remove the fear that tries to rule your life so that you live by faith in His promises which banish that fear. He calls you to be in His Word so He can keep you close to Him, so that when He returns you will join Him in the eternity to come, when all those competing voices will be gone. When you will see Him in a way that is greater than even in His transfiguration. You and I will get to see Him in all His glory. His is the only voice that should move us in our head as well as our heart. And He is calling you to you today. "Listen to Him" Listen to Jesus. Amen.