

Last Sunday after Epiphany

## **The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke 9:28-36**

About eight days after Peter had acknowledged Jesus as the Christ of God, Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"--not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

The Gospel of the Lord.

## SERMON

Wouldn't it be great if God lived with us in our house?

Wouldn't it be great if we woke up every morning and there was an angel sitting at the end of our bed, or if we could hear Jesus telling us "good morning!"

Now that really would make being a Christian much easier, wouldn't it? Because then, when life got really tough, or when we were facing difficult decisions, or when we go through a major crisis, we could just go home and ask God, or call him. Or even text him!

But life isn't like that.

The reality is we walk by faith, not by sight. The moments when we are absolutely, positively sure of the presence of God can be few and far apart. But when we experience those moments, we want to hold onto them forever.

And we are not alone. The disciples in this morning's Gospel felt the same way.

In the coming week, churches around the world will undergo a transformation as the liturgical calendar moves from the season after Epiphany to the season of Lent. Our shouts of "Alleluia!" will give way to Lent's solemn, "Lord have mercy."

And Lent weighs heavily on us. It urges us to recall the suffering and death of our Lord. So, in many ways, we arrive at this final Sunday before Lent with a mix of anticipation and anxiety, a combination of joy and dread. It is on this Sunday when we hear the story of Christ's transfiguration.

Jesus summons Peter, James, and John and they go up to the mountain to pray. While praying, Jesus was changed in front of his disciples, shown in all his glory and bathed in such bright light that everything else would have seemed like darkness. And then, if that weren't enough, Moses and Elijah, both who had preceded him in heritage from the Old Testament, suddenly appeared in glory and began speaking of Jesus' departure.

Peter, James, and John never could have anticipated this. And this was an experience that they felt may never happen again and they wanted it to last forever.

So it's no surprise that Peter wants to protect Jesus, and tells him to stay here, on the mountaintop where he will be safe. And not only will Jesus be safe, but the disciples, who saw God's glory, wanted to hold onto that glory, to protect it.

It is at that moment when a voice breaks in, "This is my Son, my chosen; listen to him!"

Listen.

Such a short, simple command.

And yet so difficult.

A few years ago I had to wear hearing aids because my family kept telling me how deaf I was. As soon as I put on that pair of hearing aids, my world was transformed! I could hear the grass crunching under my feet as I walked in the yard, I could hear birds chirping, and I could hear what my family was saying to me. But that didn't mean I listened!

Listening is about paying attention. Not interrupting. Just as in a conversation, you cannot hear the other person if you are talking or if your mind is distracted. So it is with God. If you want to hear him speak, you must be quiet and you must be focused on what he is saying.

Sometimes we fail to hear God because we need to let go of the things that make us deaf to God's voice.

We need to let go of holding on to our past guilt, regrets, and disappointments.

We need to let go of our self-doubt, self-hatred, and of always trying to be perfect.

We need to let go of our fear, anxiety, and the need to control.

We need to let go of comparison, expectation, and judgments.

We need to let go of anger and resentment.

And Sometimes we fail to hear Jesus because we practice selected listening.

We take the words of Jesus and apply them in such a way as to fit our beliefs and values and this is dangerous because when you pick and choose Jesus' teachings, you end up with a Jesus of your own making, not who Jesus really is.

So listening to God, and hearing his words of love and forgiveness, and actually applying what we hear to our daily lives is the most difficult work we will ever do.



And we live in a busy world full of noise, arguments, hourly breaking news updates, social media, text messages, everyone and everything is competing with our minds, keeping us from hearing God's voice.

So this week, let's try to stop the noise for a few moments during the day. Breathe deeply, close your eyes, clear your mind, and thank God that you are alive.

And as our Lenten journey approaches, and the chaos of the world presses in, we must remember to listen. For it is in listening that we truly hear one another. And it is in listening that we hear the voice of God. Amen.