

This Is My Son – Listen to Him!

March 5, 2017

Luke 9:28-35

28 About eight days later Jesus took Peter, John, and James with him and went up on a mountain to pray. 29 While he was praying, his face changed, and his clothes became shining white. 30 Suddenly Moses and Elijah were there speaking with him. 31 They appeared in heavenly glory and talked about all that Jesus' death in Jerusalem would mean. 32 Peter and the other two disciples had been sound asleep. All at once they woke up and saw how glorious Jesus was. They also saw the two men who were with him. 33 Moses and Elijah were about to leave, when Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here! Let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But Peter did not know what he was talking about. 34 While Peter was still speaking, a shadow from a cloud passed over them, and they were frightened as the cloud covered them. 35 From the cloud a voice spoke, "This is my chosen Son. Listen to what he says!"



Lent began four days ago on Ash Wednesday. Today is the first of six Sundays that fall within the season of Lent, which culminates on Easter. Holy Week follows Palm Sunday and we end that most holy week with Easter Sunday, when we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior. To further understand how Lent changes and helps us draw closer to God, please turn your attention to the screens. Thank you. [Play video.] Now that you know all you need to know about Lent, let us also pray.

Lent is all about preparing ourselves to be pure in heart, to be “ready” to encounter the resurrected Lord on Easter Sunday. In the early church, it was a much longer process. Converts to the faith would spend an intense period of about three years where they would study and pray and fast, all in preparation to be baptized so that they could become a part of the body of Christ on Easter Sunday. The new believers would go out early on Easter morning to be baptized. Afterward, they would put on a white robe to symbolize both purity and resurrection. The new converts would then wear the white robe for a whole week to announce to their family, to their friends, to the world their commitment to their faith. It was a bold statement.



This practice reminds me of a youth I had long ago in my youth group. We were studying a series about living out our faith in the world. We talked about how our peers can negatively influence us and our decisions. We talked about people who were Christians on Sunday mornings and at Youth group on Wednesday nights but we different people at school and out there in the world. The youth talked about the kids who wore their “Jesus t-shirts” all the time at school yet never missed a weekend party. So I challenged my youth to carry their Bibles with them at school. For a month. And it was not a ‘tuck-it-in-your-backpack’



kind of carry it around. It was set it right there on your desk in class. Carry it with you to gym and to practice. You get the picture. For any and all Youth that met the challenge, I would buy them lunch at the restaurant of their choice. Well,

Tessa and I had a very nice lunch at Olive Garden. She was the only one. But

this memory of youth group and the story of new believers wearing their baptismal robes for a whole week made me think. Do you and I authentically live out our faith in the real world?



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Last week I shared about how Jesus is eternal and about how our mountaintop experiences really help us grow in our faith. I also shared that we must take those mountaintop experiences and live them out in the real world, in our daily lives. In addition, we must always be willing, open to, and even seeking to allow God to lead us to the next mountain top. Today, from Luke 9, we again have the transfiguration story. Last week we read it in chapter seventeen from Matthew's gospel. If it is a story you like, you can also find it in Mark 9, which is the original.

In the book of Luke, the transfiguration story follows the story of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus had asked the disciples who people say He is and then He asks the disciples who they say Jesus is. Peter hits the nail on the head, saying, "You are the Messiah". After this confession, Jesus goes on to speak of his death and return one day in glory. In Matthew, the transfiguration also occurs after Peter declares Jesus the Messiah and Jesus predicting his own death. But in Matthew we also have Jesus' confrontation of Peter, which includes the famous line, "Get behind me, Satan". Talk about a turn of events for Peter. The pattern we find in Matthew – Peter's profession of Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus predicting His death and comparison of Peter to Satan, and then the transfiguration story - is the same pattern found in the

original gospel, the Gospel of Mark. It is important to note that in each gospel, Jesus ends the teaching by talking of the day He will return in glory, when He will reward those who have been faithful. It makes the question, "Do you and I authentically live out our faith in the real world?", seem like a much bigger question. And so we enter the season of Lent, a time of preparation for the coming of the resurrected Jesus.

Do you and I
authentically live
out our faith in
the real world?

Our preparations for Lent are both personal and communal. On the one hand, it is much like the forty days that Lent is patterned after. Just prior to beginning His ministry in the world, Jesus went out into the wilderness to fast and pray. Jesus was readying Himself for the work of God. Jesus spent these forty days to get in tune with God and to prepare Himself for the journey ahead. In much the same way, we journey through Lent partly as individuals. Just as the voice spoke from the clouds to Peter, James, and John, it also speaks to us, saying,

"This is my
chosen Son.
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He says!"

"This is my chosen Son. Listen to what he says!" So, in Lent, each day we read a passage from the Word of God and meditate on the words and their application to our lives. Each day we reflect on the condition of our soul and repent of any sins that we may be carrying, releasing them instead to the cross. Each day we seek God's guidance and direction for our day, so that we may live as Jesus' light and love in our world. All this to listen to the Son.

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Another part of our preparations in Lent are communal. In the United Methodist Church, much of what we do, we do as a

community of faith. It begins with baptism. Just as it was in the early church, baptism marks the commitment of the individual, usually given by the parents, to walk as a child of God. But in the words that accompany the sacrament of baptism, we also make our personal and corporate professions of faith as a community of believers and we pledge anew to give our whole lives over to being an active part of the body of Christ. In the baptismal covenant, we make a commitment to hold one another accountable as disciples of Jesus Christ and to confess our sins, not just as individuals, but as human beings forging a life together, bound eternally by the Spirit of Christ.



Today, we will also practice another communal sacrament as we partake of holy



communion. While we believe that as individuals, we can confess our sins at any time and can receive forgiveness wherever and whenever. But there is also a sense of community we benefit from when we partake together in

communion. Communion has been celebrated this way since the earliest days of the church. In this community setting, where we gather together to take in the body and blood of Christ and to repent of our sins, we do so to remember our common relationship with Jesus and our relationships with each other.

This sense of community is also lived out in our common study undertaken during the season of Lent. For some of you, this will be done on your own. You will read and meditate on the scripture reading each day as part of your daily

spiritual practices. For some of you, you will read and meditate daily and will add a level of interaction and study together with a small group. We will gather together once a week to learn and grow in our faith and to encourage and support one another as we journey through Lent. And for some of you, it will be a blend of these two as a virtual group gathers at various times to read, reflect, share, encourage, and grow together via Facebook. To help facilitate a daily reading time for each and every one of you, I am going to take a moment to give each of you a bookmark to keep in your Bibles. On the front side are questions to use each day to help you reflect upon the daily scripture reading. On the back side are the readings for each day of Lent. [Pass out the bookmarks.]



Take the bookmark home, keep it in the Bible you read each day. Choose to be a part of the season of Lent. Make the choice to be a part of this community of faith each day. Carve out the time each day to read the passage. Spend some time meditating on the Word of God. Humble yourself and enter into a period of prayer seeking God's voice and His will for your life. Commit to being a part of this community of faith as we journey together through Lent. Thank you.

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The prayer practice recommended for this week on our devotional book is *sitting in silence*. If we are to hear God in this noisy world, we must be able to find a place of silence.

Simply sitting or kneeling and being silent allows for us to become more aware of God's presence. Just as Elijah heard God's still, small voice in the silence, we too

can best hear, understand, and obey God's voice when we are silent first, allowing time and space for God to then speak. It is also in the silence that we will be able to focus in on the Holy Spirit's guidance as we shape and form our own prayers, our own part of the conversation with God. This week, I encourage you to begin your daily prayer time with silence, listening for the voice of God. It is a great way to connect to God and to better listen to Jesus. May your time of study and meditation and your times of prayer be fruitful and powerful for you this week. Let us pray.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve

- 1) When have you experienced God in an unusual or in an unexpected way?
What was the affect or outcome of this experience on your faith?
- 2) When it comes to listening to Jesus, how hard of hearing are you right now? What can you do or change to allow yourself to 'hear' better?
- 3) As we begin the Lenten season, spend a few minutes in prayer asking God what change He desires to see in your faith practices. Give time for a response. Pray for discernment on how to be more faithful.