

Sermon on the Transfiguration Luke 9:28-36; February 27,2022 “Look and Listen”

*(NIV) Luke 9: 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.*

Today’s first lesson and Gospel are about experiencing God. My first reaction to this text is the question: what are you doing with the light of Christ shining in your face? Are you veiling it from God or from others?

Now, this presupposes you spend time with God and have His light in your face. I spend a lot of time with God, but I don’t think I look different than anyone else here. Or is it that we are all shining? Does this have to do with the phenomenon called aura?

What keeps us from being closer to God? Fear? If Christ came through the clouds tomorrow, would everyone kneel or would some shoot ground to air missiles thinking they could stop him? We as humans have a great desire to be in control, to make our security sure. If we had a Theophany here – a manifestation of God’s presence - would someone dial 911 on their cell phone? Would they be thinking as they are dialing: “I need to call someone I trust more or less to take control? I can’t do it.” If

someone was breaking into your home, you wouldn't think twice of calling 911. You'd want the help even if you were armed.

Peter tries to 'stay in control,' with his 'let's build 3 booths here.' James and John are speechless. God booms out to the disciples: You are missing the big picture here. This is not a Theophany for you/ but through you/ for others. The way it was said was: "*This is my Son, my Beloved, listen to Him.*" One writer (Stan Meyer) said: This is loveable impetuous Peter, a disciple known for boldness that bordered on foolishness, whose life was a tangle of conviction and fearfulness, insight and ignorance. Yet he was a disciple that Jesus held especially dear. Eyes still dazzled by the white light of the Transfiguration, Peter jumped to action, any action, that might hallow the moment. There was no guile in this man, only a genuine gentle spirit who loved with his whole being." (Faithful, Wise and Courageous) Out of that, he said, "Let's build three booths."

People often react fearfully to spiritual experiences and charismatic gifts expressed in the church because they are 'out of control' and afraid. That's how Aaron and those with him reacted to Moses in our first lesson. Charismatic Christians wind up forming their own churches so that there is acceptance by others who are comfortable exercising their spiritual gifts. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't exercise them. If you know what your gift is, ask yourself, are you exercising that gift. Some may well say, 'Yes.' The gifts of hospitality, encouragement, giving, helping, teaching, or administration- these are some of the gifts that help us function as a church. Those are all controllable. With that gift, you feel really good about giving, helping, teaching, and so forth because it feels right, like what you were created to do. You are in harmony with something far greater. We are not so comfortable with the ecstatic gifts or miracles or healing gifts. We say that maybe healing gifts are more present in those in health care. But is that really the case?

Jesus revealed Who He was in His glory to Peter, James and John AND you and me. I am sure they wondered what they were supposed to do with this knowledge. The answer might be: "Be still and know that I am God." But God is clear with them: "This is my beloved Son, listen to Him." This comes to us who have seen the

Transfiguration through their eyes. Listen to Him. He has a lot to teach each of us if we will just / listen to Him. That also presumes trusting what He is saying. Let God's Word grab a hold of you when you listen to the Bible as you read it.

What actually happens in today's Gospel? While Jesus was praying, He was transfigured. Peter reacted flying by the seat of his pants. The other two disciples were speechless.

Why do you think Luke said that Peter "did not know what he was saying?" Luke reports them saying nothing after this experience. The other two Gospel writers tell us more. Matthew says, (17:9) "*As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, 'Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.'*"

Mark (9) gives us a little more of the conversation: *9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant. 11 And they asked him, "Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?" 12 Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? 13 But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him."* Is that the first Elijah or / John the Baptist? I believe it is about John the Baptist.

You might ask why Jesus took three disciples? In Jewish law, three witnesses were required to verify the truth.

Another question you could ask is: do we see Jesus similarly in other parts of scripture? The answer is 'yes.' Revelation 1 also shows a similar picture of Jesus: *12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned, I saw seven golden lamp stands, 13 and among the lamp stands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and*

*his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.*

God said to listen to His Son. When it comes to listening to Jesus, how hard of hearing are you?

There are times I have heard the voice of God in my head. I knew it because of His disagreement with me. It was a will contrary to my own. It was consistent with God's Word. It was a challenge. Once in a great deal of anger and arguing, the voice said, He loved me. There was no answer to that. For me, the answer was in tears. I was speechless.

Hearing God's voice does not give us status; it gives direction, hope, encouragement. We need to follow Jesus and walk the walk, not just talk the talk. We walk in faith. Each step, in faith. The question is: Do you want to hear or see?

Elisha prayed that the eyes of his servant would be opened when the servant saw they were surrounded by an army that was after them. When the servant's eyes were opened, he saw a heavenly army surrounding the other army many times the size of the pursuers. Another reading of our text has vv 34-35: As they found themselves buried in the cloud, they became deeply aware of God. Then there was a voice out of the cloud: "This is my Son, the Chosen! Listen to him."

The bottom line is that you can face your experience of God with anticipation for all you have to do is look back on your life at His foot prints and how He has watched over you, / helped you survive difficult times or experiences, and know / that His Love has been following you.

Jesus takes you by the arm and helps you up as he did with Peter, James and John. We need not be ashamed to share our experiences of God – especially with our spouse, our families, fellow Christians, and even with your pastor. God bless you as You seek His face and He shows His face to you. Listen to Him. Keep your eyes and your heart open. In Jesus' Name, amen.