

In many ways, listening is a lost art. Many people just don't know how to listen. I think there are two reasons for that. 1. Most people like the sound of their own voice over the sound of others and don't listen. 2. There is so much noise and confusion in our world today, so many competing voices that it is hard to know who to listen to. That may have been the case with Jesus disciples. That is why God the Father told them and tells us to listen to Jesus.

Why did they need to be told to listen to Jesus? A short time before the transfiguration, Jesus fed a crowd of over 4,000 people with seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. When the disciples handed out the food to the crowd, they heard the things the people were saying about Jesus. A short time later, Jesus asked the disciple **"Who do people say that I am?"** The disciples reported, **"Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."** (Matthew 16:14) They all saw Jesus as a man of God, someone who would prepare the way for the Promised Savior. Then Jesus asked the disciples, **"Who do you say that I am?"** Peter answered, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."** (Matthew 16:16) This was the first time anyone had opening called Jesus the promise Savior.

Jesus wanted to make sure His disciples had the correct understanding of the Messiah. Matthew reported, **"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."** (Matthew 16:21) Of course Peter objected. He didn't want to hear that. This happened six days before the Transfiguration.

That day Jesus invited Peter, James and John to climb a mountain with Him. These three men made up Jesus' inner circle. He took them with him when he went into the room where Jairus' daughter was laying when he brought her back to life. (Luke 8:51-52). They also stayed close to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of Jesus' arrest.

Mountains hold great significance in the Bible. Moses received the 10 Commandments on Mt. Sinai. Elijah defeated the prophets of the false god Baal on Mt. Carmel. Mountains are a place of revelation. So it should come as no surprise that Jesus' appearance was transformed on the Mount of the Transfiguration and that He is revealed as the Son of God.

It also shouldn't come as a surprise that he appeared face to face with Moses and Elijah. God established His covenant with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai and gave them the 10 Commandments. Moses represented the Law. His presence was a reminder of how God expects people to live and also of the failure of people to live up to God's commands. When Moses came down Mt. Sinai,

his face glowed with glory of the Lord, and the people were afraid. Peter, James and John were afraid when they heard the voice of God the Father.

Elijah was the great prophet of Israel. Not only did God use Elijah to call the people to repentance, but also to give them hope in the promises of God. God promised to send the Savior through the Prophets. But sometimes those promises were misunderstood. Some people thought the Messiah would be a military hero who would defeat Israel's enemies. Other people hoped he would bring peace and prosperity to the nation. Very few understood the prophecies about a suffering servant, about the Messiah who would die to pay for the sins of the people. That was why Peter objected to Jesus' prediction of his suffering and death.

When Peter saw Jesus with Moses and Elijah, he couldn't stay quiet. Instead of watching and listening, Peter said, **"Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."** (Matthew 17:4) Peter was missing the point. The Transfiguration was not about holding onto this moment. It was not a private party that Peter had been invited to. It was the launching point for Jesus' final trip to Jerusalem, to the cross and the empty tomb. So God the Father said, **"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"** (Matthew 17:5)

God the Father made it perfectly clear that Jesus is the Son of God, the promised Savior. He also wanted Peter to stop talking and start listening. Peter needed to know who Jesus was, to understand what that meant, and to listen to Him. Peter had to hear that before coming down the mountain. The mountain top experience was God's gift to Peter, James and John to confirm their faith in Jesus and to prepare them for the events that would take place on another mountain top just outside of Jerusalem.

The transfiguration is the one time in the life of Jesus where we the glory of God and the cross come together. Jesus' appearance was transformed so that his face shined like the sun. Peter, James and John got to see Jesus as He really is, the Son of God. But they were also told to listen to Him, so that they would understand what He was about to do. Jesus' prediction would come true. He would suffer, die and rise again. He would keep the Law perfectly, offer the perfect sacrifice and keep the promises God had made through His prophets to save people from sin and death. The only way Peter, James and John would know that is by listening to Jesus.

Our challenge is to listen to Jesus, too. People have so many different ideas about Jesus. Some think of Jesus only as a great man, a moral teacher, the founder of a great religion. Others, like the Pharisees and Sadducees of His day, are opening opposed to Jesus and his exclusive claim that no one can be saved without faith in Him. Sometimes, like Peter, we try to tell Jesus what He needs to do for us, our solution to our problems. That doesn't work.

So what does this mean? It means that because Jesus is who He claims to be, because He is the Promised Savior, we need to listen to Him, to take His words to heart, and to let Him be the difference in our lives. The Lenten Season begins in just three days. Maybe instead of “giving up” something like Chocolate or Coffee for Lent, why don’t you give up trying to tell God what to do and spend some time really listening to Him! He will speak to you through His Word and His people if you will only listen. Amen.