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Scripture: Mark 9:2-8 – The Transfiguration

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We are starting a series on Mark's Gospel that will take us through the next 2 months.

We're going to be looking at the middle of Mark's gospel...

Where Jesus provides a lot of teaching and instruction to his close followers.

So during this series we're going to talk about discipleship...

And what Christ asks of those who follow him.

To prepare us for the journey we're starting out with the Transfiguration.

I'm going to try and build a solid base for the upcoming weeks.

Talking about this call to listen to Jesus...

It's at the heart of being a disciple of Christ.

I invite you to turn in your Bibles to Mark chapter 9.

Our passage is the Transfiguration.

Hear now the Word of the Lord.

<sup>2</sup> After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them.

<sup>3</sup> His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

<sup>4</sup> And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters-- one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

<sup>6</sup> (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

<sup>7</sup> Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

<sup>8</sup> Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

The Word of the Lord (**Thanks be to God.**)

There's a scene in the movie Titanic...

Where Rose is desperately wandering the halls of the sinking ship...

Looking for someone with a key to the handcuffs to free her lover Jack.

She encounters an employee in one of the empty halls...

He grabs her by the arm trying to lead her in a different direction...

She's trying to get his attention...

Trying to communicate that there's a man who needs help...

He doesn't listen though...

He has her by the arm and is just dragging her in the direction opposite of Jack.

Finally, when the words don't seem to be getting through, she screams...

"LISTEN!"

And she punches the guy right in the nose.

That got his attention!

This morning we're looking at the Transfiguration...

God's way of getting the attention of his disciples.

"Listen to him!"

Our passage is a little like this...

Where the disciples are confronted with a tough reality...

A reality that's foreign to them...

A reality that just doesn't make sense.

Up to this point in Mark's story Jesus has been painted in a certain way...

As a man with authority...

As someone sent from God...

Let's look at how he's portrayed:

He heals a man with an incurable skin disease...

Just by the touch of his hand.

He heals a paralytic...

Giving feeling and strength to legs unable to support the weight of a frail man...

He does this just by the command of his voice.

Demons tremble in fear just seeing this man, Jesus.

Jesus calms the waves, wind, and storm by giving them a stern rebuke...

He feeds 5,000 people...

He walks on water...

He speaks as someone with infinite knowledge and wisdom...

This man Jesus is painted as someone special...

Someone with power...

And the disciples are there to experience all of this...

They witness the miracles...

They experience these awesome things first hand. (PAUSE)

Then they're confronted with a harsh reality...

See, six days earlier...

At the end of our last chapter Jesus gives them this startling news:

“The Son of Man must suffer and be rejected...”

“The Son of Man will be killed.” (8:31)

Of course the disciples have a problem with this...

Of course they don't want to listen...

How could Jesus suffer and be killed??

Jesus...this man performing these miracles...

This man clearly sent from God...

His buddy Peter pulls him aside and chides him for saying these things...

“This does not add up...”

“This does not make sense...”

“This is not in *our* plan for you Jesus.”

It’s like the Titanic employee leading Rose in a different direction...

Not understanding what she’s really trying to say.

Jesus’ disciples don’t listen.

So he leads 3 of them up a high mountain for the Transfiguration...

And from that mountain God says...”Listen!”

“Listen to him.” (PAUSE)

This is still God’s call to his people today:

Listen...to him.

This is the way of discipleship...

Listening to Christ...

Following where Christ leads.

But like the disciples we’re not always willing to heed the voice of God.

We have trouble listening because it’s not always what we want to hear...

By a show of hands how many of you kept up last year during the election in the States...

It was kind of hard to avoid.

I would turn on the TV and one of the candidates would be talking...

There came a point where I couldn’t take it anymore...

I couldn’t listen to what one candidate in particular was saying...

Because it’s not what I wanted to hear...

It's not what I wanted for my country.

Our lives as disciples can be the same way...

We have expectations for our lives...

We know how God should be acting in our lives...

And if we hear otherwise, it's hard to listen and follow.

Where does this connect with you?

Where at in life is it hard for you to listen right now...

Because your expectations aren't being met;

Because *you* know how life should be going...

And it's not happening.

Maybe you're in a tough place in life...

Wondering if it's time to move on from your job...

Wondering if it's a time for a change in scenery.

You expected something else out of life...

You wanted something different...

You've researched new jobs, and new cities...

You're hoping that this will be the change...

And yet there's this faint, inexplicable voice somewhere inside of you...

Leading you...

Telling you to stick it out....

Saying, "This is where I want you."

"Be patient..."

"Listen to me..."

"Trust me..."

It's *not* what we want to hear...

And it's not easy to listen to it.

Or sometimes our lives are so filled with noise that we **can't** hear...

We surround ourselves with constant stimulation...

I do the same thing...

The TV is on in the background while I look at my phone...

The radio fills the empty space in the car...

We run harried from one thing to the next...

Constantly filling our lives with noise and busyness...

Because, to be honest...

The silence is threatening...

It's scary to listen...

Who knows what we're going to hear?

Who knows what's going to come up given the space?

Probably some things we've been running from:

Some memories or thoughts about ourselves we've been looking to avoid;

Maybe places where God has been calling us to give attention;

People He's been asking us to connect with...

Relationships He's asking us to mend.

It's easier to just *not* listen...

It's easier to stay attached to *our* way of being...

To our thoughts about how things should go.

Because listening to the Lord often unsettles us...

It challenges our current reality.

For the disciples in our passage today...

They're told to listen to Jesus...

“Accept the tough things you hear him saying.”

And this command, of course is accompanied by a mighty display...

Not by a punch in the nose...

But the Transfiguration of Christ.

Scott Hozee from Calvin Seminary says that “God throws in some divine razzle-dazzle.”

His clothes become whiter than any front-load, high efficiency washer could make them...

No laundry product on earth can make a robe this radiant...

The glory of God pouring out from Christ.

To accompany this glowing razzle-dazzle...

Moses and Elijah appear...

Two heavy-weights from the OT. (Scott Hozee)

God gets their attention...

And only then does the cloud cover the mountain...

Only then does the voice say, “This is my Beloved Son, listen to him.”

**In the Transfiguration God is affirming the identity and purpose of Jesus Christ.**

**He's saying, “Listen to him.”**

God is giving the disciples a glimpse of reality from his point of view.

He's backing up and confirming everything that Jesus has said up to this point.

Mark seems to be calling us to remember a similar event that happened with Moses (cf. Exo 24).

Moses takes 3 men with him high up on Mt. Sinai.

A cloud descends over the mountain for 6 days...

The glory of the Lord.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> day Moses enters the cloud.

We're told that the Lord speaks to Moses:

"I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you *and will always put their trust in you.*" (Exo 19:9)

Mark seems to be doing the same thing.

God is affirming that this man, Jesus of Nazareth is indeed who he claims to be.

"He is my Beloved Son."

"And I want you to listen to him."

"It's good to listen to him..."

Before the Transfiguration on the mountain, Jesus says some pretty tough stuff.

He tells his friends that he is going to suffer and be killed.

Christ's words did not match their expectation for this man of God...

But God confirms in the Transfiguration that the words of Christ are accurate.

That he *does* have to suffer...

And that he *will* be killed... (PAUSE)

This man Jesus...

Who took three of his closest friends with him...

Who walked the same dusty roads of Jerusalem with the people...

This man is the Son of God.

This is who we're called to listen to...

And it's important that these 2 things are held together:

The Son of God...

And the suffering and death he'll encounter.

When we say Son of God we mean the natural, divine Son of God the Father...

He was not made or created by the Father...

But he existed with him before time began.

This man Jesus holds all power...

We catch a glimpse of his glory and radiance in the Transfiguration...

He is God in the flesh.

And yet he suffers.

He tells his disciples that he will suffer.

He tells them that he is going to be killed.

And although it's tough for the disciples to hear...

It is essential to his mission.

It is only in the power of his divinity—

Of his being God the Son...the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity—

That he is able to bear the weight of God's wrath against humanity...(Q&A 17)

God's wrath against our sin.

It is only because he is God the Son that he is able to restore us to life...

That he is able to make us whole again...

Back in connection with the only relationship that makes us full.

He heals that which is damaged between us and God...

And brings us from spiritual brokenness and death to life everlasting. (PAUSE)

We're called to listen to him.

If you're looking for connection, life, purpose, and fulfillment...

This is the way...

To listen to and follow the one who suffered for you.

This is the God who came for us when we were shackled to the hull of a sinking ship...

The only way to set us free was for him to come for us and take our place.

Now that He's set us free...

“Listen to Him.”

This Wednesday night the global church officially enters into the season of Lent.

Lent is a season of preparation.

We prepare ourselves as Christ's disciples for our journey towards the Good Friday cross...

And our journey towards the empty tomb of Easter.

In every season, and especially Lent, we take this command to “listen to him” seriously.

The church is going to offer assistance with that...

You'll see in your bulletin that during the Sunday's of Lent,

We're going to meet together before service to talk about spiritual disciplines.

And not just talk, but actually practice.

We're going to practice ways of being together with God in our busy lives.

Think of them as tools for the journey...

Tools to keep us connected with the one who loves us.

I know for a lot of us when we hear the command to “listen...”

We tense up.

We think about mean authority figures who abused power...

“Better listen up!”

“Do as I say, or else...”

“You have to do this...” or “You have to do that.”

But this call is coming from the one who loves us...

It's coming from the one who desperately desires to be with you...

To walk with you through the pain and shame of life...

The call to listen is coming from the one who gives up everything to be with you.

So I invite you into this Lenten journey over the next month and a half...

To consider what it means to live as Christ's disciple...

And consider what it means to listen to him...

And live in response to his grace.

Amen.