"Listen to Him!" -- Luke 9:28-36

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho
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Transfiguration Sunday
Pastor Michael L. McCoy

"I will tell of Thy Name to My brethren;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise Thee."
Psalm 22:22

Dear Baptized,

At the beginning of the Epiphany season of the Church year we hear the Voice from heaven as He beholds the Holy Spirit descend upon His Only-Begotten Son standing in the Jordan River. Jesus is baptized to fulfill all righteousness and in doing so, sanctifies the waters of the world for Holy Baptism. God the Father says, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

At the end of the Epiphany season we hear the same Voice - this time from a cloud on the mountain where Jesus is transfigured. On this Transfiguration Sunday, three days before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent, the eternal Son of God manifests the glory that is His from eternity. God the Father says, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him" (Matthew 17:5).

Our Father speaks and tells Jesus' disciples to "Listen to Him." When the Word of the Father is heard in this world, it is important and Christians of all ages and places do well to "Listen to Him." One of the first reactions is to ask the question, "Why?" But considering that this is the LORD God Almighty speaking, no one should presume to ask God the question, "Why?" Believe me, it is a fearful enough thing to make the attempt to explain "why" and this explanation today is undertaken only because God has explained "why" in His Holy Word.

In fact and in truth, we do learn why we ought to listen to Jesus Christ as we listen to Him. Consequently, the theme for today's sermon and for the up-coming sermons during the season of Lent and Holy Week is ... "Listen to Him."

Luke 9:28-36 - Now about eight days after these sayings He (Jesus) took with Him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And as He was praying, the appearance of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became dazzling white. And behold, two men talked with Him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His exodus, which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with Him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. And as the men were parting from Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah" -- not knowing what he said. As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a Voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen; listen to Him!" And when the Voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

Thus far the inspired and inerrant Word of the LORD our God.

For Peter, James and John, being on the mountain with the Incarnate Son of God when the appearance of Jesus' countenance was altered and His raiment was transfigured is an event that transcends time and space. Certainly this Epiphany of Emmanuel, like your Baptism and the Holy Communion, is one of those eighth day events that occurs within, and yet outside, the seven days of this world and in the Presence of the LORD. The Father's Voice is heard and He directs the three with respect to His Son, especially to hear the Son of God when He speaks.

1. A Command.

First, there the command if the Father and like any commandment that proceeds from the mouth of God, it is not optional, nor is it a divine suggestion. A Voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen, listen to Him!" The disciples of the LORD are to listen to Jesus because they will hear the Voice of God, for this is God's Word and this Word is God. Anything that the LORD God says is to be heard. In such a case, if one is to say anything in reply to the LORD, the proper and wise response is what the boy Samuel said when God called out his name in the night. The boy responded, "Speak, for Your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:10). This is what the LORD expects - He commands the hearing of the Word, not some idle prattle about doing deeds like building three booths.

To neglect listening to the Word is sin, for God the Father has spoken this command and He expects to be heard and He expects to be obeyed. To avoid hearing what Jesus says is a transgression of and against the holy will of God. To shut your ears to what the Son says is to shut your ears to what the Father says, for the Son and the Father are One along with the Holy Spirit. The yawning mouth of hell awaits those who listen neither to the Father nor to the Son. Indeed, the lake of fire will be the eternal abode for those who turn a deaf ear to the command of the Father and neglect the One thing needful - namely, to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear Him; to be in the Presence of the LORD and to listen to the Word.

2. A Hearing.

Second, in His mercy, the Father does not condemn the world and each one of us along with such an execution of judgment. Rather, He grants a hearing. A Voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen, listen to Him!" This audience is not a judicial hearing only for the purpose of listening to an indictment against humanity and the imposition of the sentence of death upon the hearer. Rather, the Father announces that Jesus is His Beloved Son Whom He has sent to be the Savior of the world and the Redeemer of all people - a Light to lighten the Gentiles and the Glory of His people Israel. "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:17).

"For the Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). This Moses, who talked with Jesus along with Elijah, had spoken of the promised Savior. In Deuteronomy, Moses communicated to the children of God, "The LORD God will raise up for you a Prophet from your brethren as He raised me up. You shall listen to Him in whatever He tells you" (Acts 3:22).

Jesus is the promised Prophet and we have been granted a hearing. To plug your ears so as not to hear the Word of God is to stop-up the organ through which the Holy Spirit does His gracious work of

bestowing knowledge, assent and trust. Thus without this Spirit wrought gift of faith, for "without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6) "for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Romans 10:17). One of the most frequently recorded words of Jesus is this, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15).

3. Content.

The third reason why we are to hear the Savior is the content of what He says. The Father bore witness, "This is My Son, My Chosen; listen to Him!" What the Son of God has to say is important. The content of His speaking is absolutely critical. And so you ask, what is the content of Jesus words that we are to hear? The answer is His Exodus. "And behold, two men talked with Him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His Exodus, which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem."

The Exodus of Jesus would take place after the Passover when He would depart from the Holy City and be led outside the gates and to the cursed place where crosses were planted in the ground. Here the Exodus of the Incarnate Son of God would take place as the Lamb of God atoned for the sins of the world and passed through the darkness of the Day and the red sea of His shed Blood. At the death of God, His spirit departed from His Body that was broken for you. But the Christ's Exodus did not end there, for He rose from the dead and departed from the tomb. Risen in flesh and bone, with body and spirit re-united, the glorious and victorious Jesus ascended into heaven and resumed His place at the right hand of the Father. The Christ returned to and entered into the promised land of Paradise.

"The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, Whom God put forth as an expiation by His Blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His Divine forbearance He had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that He Himself is righteous and that He justifies him who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:21-26).

4. Context then.

The Father speaks, "This is My Son, My Chosen; listen to Him!" and the context of these words is important. Peter, James and John were witnesses to the glorious transfiguration of Jesus and this was a mountain-top experience. They would be called, however, to journey with Jesus for the first part of His Exodus. In doing so they would be witness to the humiliation of Christ as "He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). The disciples would hear the Son of God speak the Word and then watch the events unfold that God was permitting. What they saw disturbed them - the Son of God assuming the posture and calling of a slave with towel and basin to wash their feet as He cleansed their souls - Jesus praying alone in the Garden of Gethsemane - the guards taking the Master into custody in the darkness of the night. At such times, a faith that is based upon what one sees is a lost cause. Therefore, Peter, James and John are told, "This is My Son, My Chosen; listen to Him!" and thus "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

The disciples would hear the LORD Jesus speak the Word of God and then get it all backwards in their lives. They will hear Jesus say to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priest and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him

to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and He will be raised on the third day" (Matthew 20:18-19) and will fall asleep when Jesus needed them the most, will draw the sword to save Jesus, will deny Him and will all fall away from Him as He continues His Exodus. At such times, a faith that is based upon self - be it emotions, reactions, deeds or misdeeds - is without hope. Therefore, Peter, James and John hear the Voice from the cloud, "This is My Son, My Chosen; listen to Him!" and therefore "in this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

5. Context now.

As Peter, James and John were in the Presence of the LORD and Moses and Elijah on that eighth day at Mount of Transfiguration, so also you are in the Presence of the LORD on this day when angels and archangels and all the company of heaven laud and magnify the Crucified, Risen and Ascended Christ. And just as it was good for the three disciples to have been there, so it is good for you to be here today. But so also, as they had to return to the valley below, you do as well. As Christ went with them, He goes with you. As the Voice of the Father spoke to them, so also we hear "This is My Son, My Chosen; listen to Him!"

The explanation why is the same as what you have heard. You are returning to lives lived where "nations will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places" (Matthew 24:7). It will be important to hear Jesus say, "I AM with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). You are returning to stations and vocations where you will often fail and fall short of the glory of God. Every eighth day you will do well to come here and hear His forgiveness won for you and to know that you, because of Your Baptism into Christ - are a part of His Exodus and have been crucified with Christ and share in His Resurrection.

Dear Baptized, when visited with suffering, disease, pain, grief, injury or declining health, it is important to abide by that Voice which says, "This is My Son, My Chosen; listen to Him!" and hear the glorious Son of God say, "And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:3).

Or, as the hymn stanza states that we will sing at the end of the Divine Service this morning ...

"'Tis good, Lord, to be here.
Yet we may not remain;
But since Thou bidst us leave the mount,
Come with us to the plain." (TLH 135, st. 5)

Throughout the penitential season of Lent and into Easter, our sermon theme here at Our Redeemer will be "Listen to Him." I invite, encourage and beg you to come to this holy house and hear the words of Jesus. This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday and we will hear the first words spoken by Jesus from the cross ... "Father, forgive them."

Amen.

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (John 6:68- 69). Amen.