

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Watertown, WI**

**“Listen to Him!”**

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Transfiguration – 2/27/2022

Luke 9:34-35

“Let everything be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses” the Bible says (2 Cor. 13:1). So, Jesus brings Peter, James and John with him up the mountain, where the three disciples are given this incredible and mysterious experience. Jesus is transfigured before them. It’s the same root word in Greek as it is for the word *metamorphosis*. The appearance of his face is altered; his clothing becomes dazzling white. Then the experience expands to include Moses and Elijah, as if those representatives of the Old Covenant are bringing continuity to the One who embodies the New Covenant, the new relationship with God.

Then appears a cloud on the scene. You recall there was a cloud on Mt. Sinai as well, as part of the Old Covenant. Now the cloud appears again (the Lord is doing a new thing), and sure enough, we hear the voice of the Father in heaven. “This is my Son. Listen to him!” This is the Promised One, the Messiah promised many centuries before; there’s not going to come another. Listen to him!

Trouble is we don’t listen well . . . to Him or to one another. By nature, we’re not good listeners, and my fear is we’re getting worse. You’ve experienced it. You’re in a conversation with another person about a serious matter. You’re choosing your words, expressing your thoughts, but then it becomes perfectly clear you’ve lost him. He’s not listening anymore. He’s crafting his retort, or his next story, or maybe he’s checking his phone that just buzzed and dinged and flashed, but he’s no longer listening.

Or you’re a little worried about something, maybe a surgery is coming up with the ensuing therapy that follows, and she does you one better and tells you about a procedure she had that was so much worse. She wasn’t listening.

Or you’re getting acquainted with someone new, and you’re trying to be kind, asking him lots of questions about himself as if he was the most interesting person in the world, and that’s all you can do, because he never asks anything of you. It’s a one-way conversation. He is perfectly content to carry on with his autobiography and never stops to listen.

If you’re married, you’ve experienced it. There’s a disagreement, an argument and one or the other or both stops listening altogether, and for the next couple of hours you each retreat instead into cold, silent isolation.

Part of what’s wrong with the human condition is that we don’t listen very well. We get so fixated on ourselves, our own troubles and needs. Or we get so comfortable in the ideological silos created for us by internet algorithms, we get so convinced of our perspectives, so entrenched and intolerant that we conclude the other must be poorly informed or just evil.

Listening to another; it’s such a simple concept, and yet it’s one we really struggle with. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “The first service that one owes to others . . . is listening to them. Just as the love of God begins with listening to his Word, so the beginning of love for our brothers and sisters is learning to listen to them.”

By nature, we’re not very good listeners. But another problem is when we do listen, we tune into the wrong voices. Instead of listening to Jesus who speaks only truth, we tune into screen idols, who, like Peter, don’t always know what they are saying or why they are saying it.

Recently on ABC’s “The View”, a self-important celebrity, an actress, asserted that the holocaust wasn’t about race, but rather about man’s inhumanity to man. Of course, she’s uninformed. Of course, Hitler insisted the Germanic “Aryans” were superior to all other races, and of course he maintained the Jews were an inferior race, and then targeted them for extermination. If that’s not racism I’m not sure what is. But she had a platform, a bias, and like many other celebrities and politicians, she used it to enthusiastically educate us on a subject about which she could not write a serious two page essay.

Who else does this? Who speaks with presumed authority on things about which we know very little? Who speaks with a sense of moral superiority? In our culture, that would be every one of us, everyone with a Twitter account, everyone with a smart phone, everyone with a classroom of students, everyone at the helm of a business, everyone with an election coming up. These days, everyone has a microphone.

Be careful, then, who you listen to. 1 John 4, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God” (v. 1). That a woman is a brilliant actress does not qualify her to rewrite history. That a

man is a gifted athlete does not make him an infectious disease expert. That a politician keeps saying the same thing over and over again does not make it truth. Be careful who you listen to.

Adam and Eve listened to the serpent when they should have listened to God. The kings of Israel listened to their advisors when they should have listened to the prophets. Pilate listened to the crowd when he should have listened to Jesus. Be careful who you listen to.

Jesus said, "See that no one leads you astray, for many will come saying, 'I am the Christ.'" (Mt. 24:4). That is, many imposters will pretend to have all the answers. Stay away from them. Don't listen to them. From 2 Timothy chapter 3, and as I read this, think about some of our politicians. "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud . . . ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people" (vv. 2-5). Don't follow them on Twitter. Don't listen to them. "Avoid such people" the Bible says.

"This is my Son. Listen to Him". Listen to Jesus. He speaks to us through his Word. His Word is His voice. So, one of my professors at the seminary suggested when you first look at an appointed text that you'll be preaching on, close the door, turn off your phone, get rid of all the distractions you can, and read it over ten times slowly and quietly. Don't start forming your own thoughts, your own words. Just read it. Don't start reading what others have said about the text. Just let God speak to you through his Word.

This is my Son. Listen to him. The Father isn't telling us to listen to Jesus *or else*. The Father is telling us to listen to Jesus *because* . . . *because* the Father loves us. The Father is pointing to his Son *because* he knows Jesus is the Truth, and therefore He is trustworthy in a world full of untrustworthy voices.

Jesus never tries to persuade a crowd with half-truths, with exaggerations, or with self-serving lies . . . like our politicians do. He never blurts out poorly formed opinions like our celebrities do. He never tries to draw you in with uninhibited sensationalism like our media does. He never misleads you with red-herrings or euphemisms or hyperboles; He is never swayed by political bias like so many in academia are. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no matter what anyone else says, no one comes to the Father except through him.

When you want something better, something higher than the standard fare that comes from the mouths of politicians and celebrities and academics, or anyone with a smart phone, then you're going to have to listen to Him, because His thoughts are not your thoughts and His ways are not your ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts (Is. 55:8ff).

When you worry about your faith, how that little light flickers and sputters and is at risk of going out, that's not the time to disengage. That's the time to lean in and listen to Him, because "Faith comes by hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

When you're tired and worn out, listen to Him, because He says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt. 11:28-30).

When you feel inconsequential in the world, listen to Him, because He says, "I know my own and my own know me . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep" (Jn. 10:14).

When you feel most sinful and unworthy, listen to Him, because He says, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mk. 2:17).

When you're worried about your children, grandchildren, the choices they're making, listen to Him. "If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13).

When the world news leaves you wondering whether we might be teetering on the brink, listen to Him. "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

When you need some assurance that you're safe in His hands, listen to Him, because he says, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one can snatch them out of my hand."

Listen to Him, because there's no one else who gives what He gives. "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:68).

To Peter, James and John on that day, and to you and me on this day, the voice from the cloud, the voice of your loving Father pointing to Jesus, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" Amen.