

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

The other day I was sitting in my office and I looked out the window and it struck me that there was total silence. There was no one in the church and nothing running in the church. And I could see things happening outside but I could not hear anything at all. Now my wife, Beth, will probably say that is how I live most of life even when there are things to be heard, but quite honestly it was striking how silent it was. And I was actually listening for something. That is quite a contrast to most of life where voices and noises literally invade our lives. It is probably why for those who do hear, the stark silence is so strange.

As strange and as interesting as our gospel story is today – sight wise – it ends with the command to listen. And that is important. You would think that from the details of what happened on the mountaintop that what was seen would remain paramount, but not so. The story today takes place about halfway through Mark's story of the good news of Jesus. The story has gone from Jesus' baptism and testing to his preaching, healing, teaching and doing many other works of power. But here Jesus takes his three closest friends and goes up to a high mountain. Lots of stories take place on mountains in the Bible and every one is significant. Here also.

On top of the mountain Mark says that Jesus was changed – he morphed into some other appearance – his clothes were dazzling white and with him were these two great figures from Israel's history – Moses and Elijah – they were like the Washington and Lincoln of our history. And the three were talking. Obviously Peter, James and John were terrified and Peter even suggested building some temporary dwellings – but as Mark says – he really didn't know what he was saying. Then if all of that isn't strange enough, a cloud overshadowed them – one of the signs of God's presence in the Old Testament – and they heard a voice – This is my Son, the beloved. This is the same voice that spoke the same words to Jesus as his baptism. But then these words are added – "Listen to him!"

The voice didn't say – "enjoy the show" or "remember to tell everyone what you saw", but rather – "listen to him". That seems to be the heart of the whole story. Listen to him – to Jesus. Why and what do we listen to?

First, we listen to Jesus because he reveals the very heart of God for you and me and this world. We listen for the word of God for our lives – especially the promises that God makes to us through Jesus Christ. As Morgan is baptized today she and all the baptized have been made a promise by God through Jesus – you belong to me – you are my child – you are sealed with Holy Spirit and marked with the Cross of Christ forever. When we come to receive Holy Communion – we listen – because it

is not just the eating and the drinking but the eating and the drinking with the words – my body and my blood given and shed for you.

You know, there are so many promises out there in the world – of products that will change your life – of politicians that will make everything better – of promises from people that are only really given to get something from you and when you are no longer needed – good bye. The sad part is that we have become jaded and it is understandable. We have learned not to trust promises because mostly they are lies and deceptions. But we can trust and believe and hope in all the promises God makes through Jesus Christ. That is one reason – a big reason why God calls us to listen to him.

Of course we also listen to him for guidance through life. When we make decisions, when we deal with difficult situations and when our congregation contemplates and asks “where are we being called to be and what are we being called to do?” We listen to Jesus. We listen to his words through the witness of scripture. Both to the pleasant words of “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” or “Love the Lord your God with your heart, soul, mind and strength”. But also we listen to the difficult words because they are for us too, “Whoever wishes to save their life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake and for the gospel of the gospel will save it”. But since our call is to live out our baptism everyday in faith, love and obedience to the will of God, how can we even begin to do that unless we first listen.

And sometimes we have to shut all of the words around us off and sit in silence and listen in prayer. That seemed to be such a big part of Jesus’ own ministry that he opened himself up to God’s will in all circumstances and many times sought to be alone to be in prayer – and I have to think that that was not just to keep talking to God but also to listen. I remember the early days of being here at Jason Drive when we were still working with our Mission Director, Helen Harms. There were times that things were not always clear and not always easy in our year in the fire hall and our first days here. And I remember talking with Helen one time about some things hoping for a jiffy solution and she said -- “It sounds like you and the leaders and the whole congregation need to stop and pray some more about this”. It wasn’t what I wanted to hear. It was, however, sage advice.

And we listen for hope – because we always need a word that helps us get out of bed and move forward. We need to know that amidst all the difficult times and the heartache that there is more – that God has a larger purpose for us and this creation. We listen because the good news of Jesus does not end in healing or preaching or works of power or even a scene of glory on the mountaintop – but in the cross and in the good news of Easter. For there God’s word speaks its loudest – nothing will thwart God’s ultimate purposes – including death. And there is always a new day coming because Jesus goes before us from the tomb to make all things new. So we listen for hope.

This is by Son, my beloved. Listen to him!

