

Daily Discipleship

Transfiguration (C) – Luke 9:28-43

Imperatives of Discipleship – *Listen!*

Focus Question: *How can I listen more closely to Jesus?*

word of life

“This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him.” Luke 9:35 (NRSV)

Read Luke 9:28-43

There is a saying that in real estate, the three most important things are location, location, location. The same might be said today as we seek to reflect and understand the meaning of Luke’s account of Jesus’ transfiguration: location is everything!

The physical location where the event occurs is “the mountain” (vs. 28). The specific mountain is not named, nor does it seem important to the account. It is not unusual to identify “the mountain” in Scripture as the place of divine revelation. It is on the mountaintop that Moses meets God and is given the 10 Commandments. (See today’s first lesson from Exodus 34:29-35 and Exodus 19:3.) It is on the mountain of the Lord where all nations will come to learn the Lord’s ways (Isaiah 2:2-3). Nor is it unusual in Luke’s gospel for Jesus to withdraw to a place apart to pray. (See Luke 3:21, 6:12, 9:18, 11:1.) The mountaintop is the place set apart to listen, to discern God’s will, and to experience God’s presence.

1. *Where do you go to experience God’s presence and discern God’s will?*
2. *What makes an event a “mountaintop” experience?*

Just as the physical location is important in understanding today’s reading, so too is the location of the story within the Gospel of Luke. The transfiguration gives divine confirmation to all that has taken place in the verses preceding it:

- * Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Christ (Luke 9:18-20) is validated. Jesus’ appearance is changed, and a heavenly voice clearly identifies Jesus as God’s Son, God’s Chosen One (vs. 35).
- * The first of Jesus’ “passion predictions” – Jesus telling his disciples of his impending suffering and death (Luke 9:21-22) – is confirmed. The sudden appearance of two men before Peter, James, and John (vs. 30) will be echoed at the resurrection (Luke 24:4) and ascension (Acts 1:10) of Jesus. The topic of conversation between Jesus and these men (identified as Moses and Elijah and uniquely recorded only in Luke) is of Jesus’ “departure” (literally, his “exodus”) which he is to accomplish in Jerusalem (vs. 31). The account of sleepy disciples on a mountainside trying to stay awake while Jesus prays will be heard again in the story of Jesus’ agony on the Mount of Olives (22:39-46) the night before his crucifixion and death.

Yes, Peter, your words are true: Jesus is the Christ, God’s chosen, beloved Son. Yes, James and John, Jesus’ words are true: God’s chosen one will suffer, die, and be resurrected from the dead. “So, listen to him,” the heavenly voice says, “listen to him!” (vs. 35)

3. *What does it mean for Peter to confess Jesus is the Messiah?*

The location of the transfiguration account also gives meaning to what is to follow. Jesus speaks the second passion prediction, admonishing his disciples to “let the words sink into your ears” (Luke 9:44); and then Jesus “sets his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). The shining, penetrating clarity of Jesus’ glory gives Jesus and his followers of every age the strength to “face Jerusalem.” Only after his death and resurrection did his disciples truly hear and understand.

4. *Why is it so difficult to listen to God?*
5. *What gets in the way of our hearing?*

word *among us*

“Remember this day. And listen to what I’m telling you right now, because you’re going to need it when things get tough.”

The dean of the school looked each new graduate directly in the eye, emphasizing her point to the new medical residents who were under her instruction. Hours had been spent in the classrooms studying the textbooks. Days of work had been done in the lab. Weeks had been spent in review and tests. They knew so much; but they had so much yet to learn.

“Listen to me,” she said again. “Today is a great day. You’ve been accepted into one of the best medical programs in the country. I want you to remember today. Remember not only what you have been taught, but remember what you have been called to be and the oath you have taken.

“There will be days ahead when you’ll wonder why you went into this profession, days when things will go wrong, days when you’ll make mistakes, days when you’ll fail. When those days come – and they will surely come – mark my words well – remember this day.”

1. *What gives you strength when faced with difficult days?*

Jesus knew of tough days ahead. He knew of coming betrayal and sorrow. He saw the cross in the distance for himself. He knew the grief and loss looming ahead for his disciples. He knew. And as he faced Jerusalem, he knew God’s loving embrace and affirmation – “This is my Son, the Chosen.”

2. *What makes the memory of “mountain-top” experiences so helpful during tough days?*
3. *How can we keep alive those memories?*
4. *What words do we need God to whisper in our ears to encourage us?*

We, too, know days when things go wrong, when we make mistakes, when we fail. We know that Ash Wednesday is just a few days away; we see the shadow of death on the horizon. And so we are called to listen in order to find strength for the coming journey. Hear the good news that the one whom we follow is none other than God’s own Son. Hear of the depth of God’s great love that would give God’s beloved Jesus to die for us. Hear Jesus’ promise to walk the journey before and beside us, through the grief and sorrow of death and into the promised resurrection.

For we, too, have been called and claimed as a child of God. We, too, live under the shadow of the cross of Jesus – a symbol of death which gives us life. We see the brightness of the transfigured and resurrected Christ in the distance. And he calls us to trust and to follow.

Listen to him. His words are trustworthy and true. His word is a lamp and a light on the difficult journey of life. Listen to him.

5. *Take a moment to listen in silence to Jesus.*
6. *Write down on a piece of paper the words of Jesus to you.*

Prayer

O God, open our hearts and our minds to hear, understand, trust, and believe your promises. Amen

Dig Deeper

Exodus 34:29-35

last word

Listen this week
for the sounds of God’s love in your life.



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