

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON

Sunday of the Transfiguration

February 27, 2022

Psalm 99:1–9 (ESV):

The Lord Our God Is Holy

99 The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble!

He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

2 The LORD is great in Zion;

he is exalted over all the peoples.

3 Let them praise your great and awesome name!

Holy is he!

4 The King in his might loves justice.

You have established equity;

you have executed justice

and righteousness in Jacob.

5 Exalt the LORD our God;

worship at his footstool!

Holy is he!

6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests,

Samuel also was among those who called upon his name.

They called to the LORD, and he answered them.

7 In the pillar of the cloud he spoke to them;

they kept his testimonies

and the statute that he gave them.

8 O LORD our God, you answered them;

you were a forgiving God to them,

but an avenger of their wrongdoings.

9 Exalt the LORD our God,

and worship at his holy mountain;
for the LORD our God is holy!

1st Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 34:1–12 (ESV):

The Death of Moses

34 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, 2 all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, 3 the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the Valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. 4 And the LORD said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, ‘I will give it to your offspring.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.” 5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD, 6 and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day. 7 Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated. 8 And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

9 And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. 10 And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, 11 none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, 12 and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

EPISTLE: Hebrews 3:1–6 (ESV):

Jesus Greater Than Moses

3 Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, 2 who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house. 3 For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. 4 (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) 5 Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things

that were to be spoken later, 6 but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

Gospel: Luke 9:28–36 (ESV):

The Transfiguration

28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. **29** And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. **30** And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, **31** who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. **32** Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. **33** And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. **34** As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. **35** And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" **36** And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

Sermon 9 – Sunday of the Transfiguration

"Hey Listen"

Luke 9:28-36

Dear friends,

On this Sunday of the Transfiguration Jesus is transfigured, which is not that surprising. The purpose of this event is a bit elusive, its not exactly easy to figure out what Jesus intended for this. We can get some clues from the context, from what happens before, which we'll get to in a minute. We can get some clues from the ones Jesus chose to witness this event. We can get ideas from what God the Father says and from who is there. Ultimately this is a glimpse of destiny. This is a statement of intent. Jesus is showing His purpose, He's demonstrating how He will accomplish that purpose, and Jesus finally

is giving the disciples a taste of things to come. Why? That's a tougher question. There must be a light of some kind, and Jesus is our light. Take from that what you will.

This whole chapter is a midpoint of sorts. It's not quite in the middle of the Gospel of Luke, more towards the beginning halfway mark. Luke doesn't write his Gospel like a book, but God knows that we sinners need hints that something bigger is on the way sometimes. If you watch a lot of TV or movies you know how important pacing is, you need to have things happening at a consistent rate in order to keep you interested. If the pacing is too slow, it gets boring, nothing is happening. If its too fast, it gets confusing, you don't have time to digest what you're seeing. I think Luke puts the Transfiguration here to keep that pacing up. Jesus is doing lots of marvelous things but there's no sense of the overall purpose. There's no hint as to what all this is *for*. This is what the Transfiguration reveals to us. This is the point, the end goal, and we need to keep the end goal in mind when the road gets dark, when its time to take up the cross and follow Jesus through the valley of the shadow of death.

“ Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Quick stop here for a minute. Why these men? We don't get any official hierarchy within the twelve disciples, but unofficially, you know how group dynamics work. In any group of men, you're going to have a few strong personalities who the others will look to, that's just usually how things work. Each of these men demonstrate those personalities throughout the Gospels, and they will arise as leaders within the church as history tells us. Each of these three writes epistles in the New Testament. Most of the disciples just vanish, but these guys endure. Jesus knows this, and so He takes these men to be exclusive witnesses of this event.

“29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. 30 And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” Jesus is, with this action, demonstrating quite simply that He is the Son of God. That's what He's doing. The disciples seem to suspect this, they're not all the way certain though they will say that He is from time to time, but to see it in its full

burning radiance makes quite the impression. This isn't just another back country preacher they've been following. It's God Himself. The disciples more than anyone else needed to be absolutely certain of this, they needed this in order to be effective witnesses for this truth. They needed it now, because Jesus is about to take them down dark roads with the crucifixion.

With him are Moses and Elijah, and those two are very significant figures from the Old Testament. Basically, the Old Testament is talking to Jesus, think of it that way. Elijah has kind of gone by the wayside for us Christians as time has gone on, so this sounds strange to us. We get why Moses is important, but Elijah doesn't seem that important. He shows up in a couple books but why not Isaiah? Why not Jeremiah, or David? I'm not sure, all I can tell you is that as unimportant as Elijah seems to us, he was a big deal to the Jews. They considered him to be the next best prophet after Moses, which always struck me as a little weird, because Isaiah writes this massive work of art and Jeremiah spends most of life suffering a great deal. Why Elijah? The Jews had a lot of legends and a lot of supplementary material about the guy, some of it has survived, but Elijah was a household name back then. He was the other half of the Old Testament, and here he is, talking to Jesus.

These two men discuss Jesus' departure with Him, which is a nice way of saying that they're talking about His crucifixion and death. Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, the whole Old Testament, is talking to Jesus about how He is about to die. The entire Bible is about Jesus, you have heard me talk this to death, and this is why. All those stories in the Old Testament aren't just random history, they're acts of salvation that God uses to whet our appetites for the real salvation to come. For the disciples, that salvation is staring them in the face and being talked about in their ears. This gives the clue as to one of the purposes of this vision. Jesus is going to start addressing the endgame more and more after this event. This is what it is all for. The kingdom of God is coming, and its coming in my crucified body to people all throughout time. The crucifixion is my crowning, it is my finest hour, it is my purpose. God seems to want to reinforce that even in this heavenly bright vision, and I don't want you to forget that. We always think that being on

the Mount of Transfiguration would've been so cool, so beautiful, so reassuring. I think it was, but what is the main talking point during this event? Jesus' crucifixion. His death. His disgrace. This reminds us that as ugly and sad as the crucifixion is, this act of injustice, it is the centerpiece of God's work on this earth. It is God's ultimate action and the real purpose of Jesus' coming and His going. Even amidst the glory of heaven, Moses and Elijah shining bright, you cannot escape the crucifixion. You cannot escape the dead, bloody Jesus that is dead and is bloody so that you can see all this. The disciples are there to witness, and we are here to believe.

Peter blabs, as Peter does, but the next importance comes afterwards. **“34 As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!”** A cloud came and overshadowed them. We often think of God as bright, as light, as beautiful, but one of God's favorite ways to appear in the Old Testament is as a cloud. If you were to ask an Israelite to draw God, they would probably draw Him as a cloud more than anything else, because that's overwhelmingly how He chooses to appear. There was a cloud hanging around the ark of the covenant in the Old Testament, so when the cloud surrounds them, they think they are stepping into God's throne room. They think that God's inner sanctum, where He actually is, is enveloping them. That's why they're terrified. No one goes into God's cloud and comes out alive, that is a fact beaten into the head of every good Jew that ever lived. But they don't die, because God isn't here to kill them, He's here to save them. He's here to preach to them, and I love that the mighty voice and proclamation of God says something so simple. This is my Chosen One, listen to him.

In the end, that is what God wants from you. He wanted these leaders among the apostles to see as well as listen, but you aren't apostles. Those words summarize the whole of God's demands of you. The Ten Commandments are there, sure, we should do them, but the Ten Commandments are just part of what Jesus says to you. This is my son, my chosen one, listen to Him. That's your mission, that's your goal, that's your life, right there. You have other things to do. You have jobs to do, or jobs you've done, you have

retirement to do, and retirement can be awfully busy. You have health problems, family problems, old hates or old worries. God is not telling you to ignore those things, but He wants you to listen to His chosen one while you do those things. The devil wants us to believe that the voice of God is a demanding one. It isn't. He just wants you to listen. In listening, you have life. In listening, you have heaven itself there for you just as much as the disciples were confronted with it. In listening to God, you have God Himself, Jesus, presented to you. It rarely makes a difference right away. When I was younger, just setting into college, I brought with me cassette tapes of people reading the Bible. I would listen, and could never remember what I had just listened to. It never made any difference in college, but I kept listening. Slowly, gradually, painfully, the words of God wove their way into my heart and into my soul, and I'm both really really not special and also easily distracted. If it worked for me, it'll work for you.

This is my Son, God says to you. Listen to Him. Listen to Him when He takes you to the mountaintop to see His glory. Listen to Him when He takes you to the cross and teaches you the meaning of pain and loneliness. Listen to Him when you are young, when age takes you, when sickness assails you, when blessings come for you. When you listen you see Jesus, just like the apostles did. When you listen to Him, you are brought into Jesus' presence, just like the apostles were. When you listen, Jesus is changing you, molding you, transforming you, a tiny piece at a time.

You might have nothing to say for it. They did. They went away quiet, just like you often do. Say hello after the service, maybe a few things to say to your friends, then its off to home. Listening is doing in the Christian faith. Don't forget that like I did.

Amen.