

Transfiguration of our Lord Year C
Luke 9:28-37
Sermon for Advent LC
February 14th, 2010

“Listen...Jesus Loves You”

Dear sisters and brothers, grace to you and peace from God the Father and our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

It was my first time really traveling to a place that would completely be foreign to me— from the food, to the language, to the roads— I was a bit nervous as we landed in Guatemala City— the small group of us seminary students and our instructor who were prepared to spend three weeks in the outlands of Guatemala. I did not know Spanish that well and most of our group was in the same boat so there was a sense of anxiety as we deplaned. Finally, after walking aimlessly for what seemed like a very long time we heard Patricia, our instructor exclaim in joy “Juan, it is good to see you!” She then introduced us to a gentleman by saying, this is our man for the night, he will get us where we need to go, his name is Juan— Listen to him— he knows what he’s talking about and he knows what matters.” We listened, we followed his commands and everything worked perfectly. A little different situation but the same kind of lost feeling— it was one of my first nights working at Champps Restaurant and Sports Bar in the Twin Cities— a rather large, busy place— I was bartending and a little unsure of myself. My friend Tony who was working with me realized my anxiety and told me to relax, he then introduced me to a man named Steve— he said this is Steve, he’s a regular— always comes in and eats – if you need anything just ask him, but Listen to him and you will be better off. I did, for the better part of four years as I worked while in Seminary I listened to Steve and learned from him. I imagine most of you have at one point or another been lost either literally or figuratively and perhaps you have found one to listen to....I would even guess there has been times when you were the one that people listened to...the comfort that comes from knowing someone who knows what matters and being able to listen to them is priceless. Listen to him...those words from God today in the Gospel about Jesus are even more valuable and comforting than the words about the man in a foreign city and the gentleman sitting at the edge of the bar— words that provide direction, comfort, challenge and hope. Words to live by.

The scene on the mountain that we heard about in Luke’s gospel is absolutely amazing isn’t it? I mean you have Jesus going to the top and changing literally in his appearance, and hearing the words from Elijah and Moses about what he must do and he shines— in front of some of his disciples he shines in glory because the radiance of God is shining through him. We could spend the next hour talking about this experience, the appearance of Moses and Elijah and the transfiguration, the way this sets the stage for Jesus to really get on his business of heading towards the cross, the way this signifies the ultimate glory of Christ and who he is, and the literal changing of Jesus and how that too happens to us because God claims us and washes us clean... but what seems to be yelling for attention today in the Gospel is not the brilliance of the scene on the mountain but those three simple words that God speaks about Jesus after declaring him again as his son and his chosen. “Listen to Him”. God says for Peter, John, and James to Listen to him, God says to us this day as well— “listen to him”.

Dear friends, those words though simple are ultimately complex in the urgency of them and the importance of us obeying them. Listen to him God says....will you? Do you? Are you? Listening to Jesus, the one who was chosen and the one who God sent for you?

What is Jesus saying to you anyway? I think that question could have many answers depending on where you are at in your life situation and realistically can only truly be answered by you. But, there are most definitely some concrete things that I think Jesus says which we all need to hear, all the time. Today, I want to tackle a couple of those general things that I know Jesus does say when we actually listen- when we allow ourselves to stop and pay attention to the good news that God would have us hear, when we stop trying to make the Gospel message fit our own needs and allow it to breathe Christ has some very clear words for us. The first I believe and most important is this- I love you. Jesus says that and I hope you know it- Jesus says it and I hope you believe it. You may say well duh, of course he does- but I have heard way to many of you say you can't believe it for one reason or another- and that is rubbish- Christ loves you...our children know so well and recite each week it seems in the children's sermon- so why is so hard for us to accept and understand- Jesus loves you....listen to him as he tells you- you are mine...I love you so much that I died for you and will never abandon you no matter what- and furthermore nothing you do can make me love you any more and nothing you do can make me love you any less...friends listen to Him... he says "I love you!" Believe it, claim it, accept it, live it!

The second general thing I think Jesus wants you to hear if you truly will stop and listen is this; I love you so much that I died for you, now get to work and let me lead you to let your light shine. You see friends, once again we have to consider where Christ is leading us- and we have to understand that we are his hands and feet and we must get to work in sharing his love. If we quiet ourselves enough, we will hear his voice calling us to go. Quick story to end on- I got a call this week from one of the members of our community. He wanted to meet for coffee because God wouldn't leave him alone and was bothering him to live out his faith more and he wanted to talk about it. Through conversation he shared that he felt he needed to be about the effort of knocking on doors and sharing the news that Advent is here. Friends, stop and listen to Jesus...where is he calling you, where is he leading you. You see...know that he loves you and let that love be the foundation which forces you to take a risk and live your faith out.

God loves you and so do I. Amen.