

“Listen to Jesus: a Sermon for Transfiguration Weekend”

A sermon prepared by the Rev. Hank Lay
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Transfiguration Weekend

2 Kings 2:1-12; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9

“Listen to Jesus”

May the words that I speak and the thoughts of our hearts be pleasing to God who speaks to us through Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Whenever I watch TV I am confronted with commercials touting the amazing qualities of the product. Whether it is a car taking me wherever I want to go, a medicine that puts a new bounce in my step, a phone plan that allows me to take endless photos of my dog - all seek to elicit a WOW reaction.

This past Epiphany Season has been like that for Christians. Jesus shows up in houses of worship and poor village homes and “Wow! We’ve never seen someone like this.” And we, who have heard many of these stories many times over the years have be invited to have a similar Wow experience, to see Jesus with new eyes. We are like those original disciples, stumbling along in amazement at what is happening before us.

This is Transfiguration weekend and we have one last Big Reveal. Three disciples - perhaps Mary and Ned and Dave - gather with Jesus perhaps to

plan the next preaching campaign. And suddenly everything about Jesus changes. Bathed in a bright light, seeing visions of ancient faith leaders - the disciples don't know what to do. Peter seems to want to build something to capture the moment, but a voice from heaven suggests otherwise - "This is my Beloved Son; listen to him." And suddenly silence, only the wind blowing across the mountain top. What will be next?

Think of Elisha. He was nearly blown away by a whirlwind - a mini tornado blowing in from the wilderness - and nearly singed by fiery horses and a chariot. And then silence. Elijah is gone and Elisha is alone. What will be next?

What will be next? Next for us, if and when we are nearly blown away by an encounter with Jesus?

Some of us may wish to back away, finding all this much too unsettling. Recall that not everyone ran off to follow Jesus. Paul speaks of those who can't see the light of the Gospel. Something or someone gets in their way. Are they not ready to listen to Jesus? Unwilling to change, whatever they think that may mean? Unsure of themselves? Look back with me at Elisha. We find him first in First Kings chapter 19. He appears to be a rich boy working on his parents' farm. And Elijah shows up and calls him to follow. Sounds like Jesus and the disciples, right? Elisha tried to delay, saying he had family business. Elijah said, 'Whatever,' and walks off. And after a delay Elisha went after him, and his life was changed.

Think of Peter, James and John. Jesus called them and, after exchanging looks with one another and their fathers, they went. And their lives were changed.

All of them found that God gave them power, called the Spirit. For what purpose? Well, listen to Jesus. He'll tell you. Peter, James and John followed Jesus back down into the crowds, to people who were hurting, who were seeking relief from illnesses and oppression, from struggle without end, who needed a word of hope. Jesus taught the disciples how to respond, how to bring God's love to their hurting world.

That's where we are. We're listening. Some of us have been on this journey for years. Others are just starting. Others are facing a mid-life correction. Our situations are different from the Bible. Manasquan is not the royal courts of Samaria or Jerusalem, nor the countryside of Galilee and the bustling city of Jerusalem.

Manasquan is a town enveloped in a pandemic of illness. People are sick, dying, isolated, lonely, depressed, struggling, afraid. If you do not feel this way, then you have something to offer to those who do. To us has been given a word of life. You don't need to have all the answers. Jesus does. We only give what we have. And usually it is enough.

The how can be deceptively simple. If you still do your own shopping, pay

attention to those around you. A simple offer to assist in finding an item, patience while another person takes their time, a thank you to the check-out clerk or the person stocking the shelves - each action conveys the love of God.

If you live in a condominium or a village, reach out by phone to be sure no one feels alone and isolated. Perhaps bring someone a surprise gift of flowers from the grocery store. Bring them their mail on a snowy day. Whether you call it a random act of kindness or paying it forward, a cup of water offered in Jesus' name carries healing power beyond our wildest dreams.

And, if you hear the voice of Jesus, consider joining our Social Ministries Committee or our Justice and Peace Committee. Each is helping us move beyond ourselves to address the bigger social problems that surround us. The love of God knows no bounds. Find the wonder of following Jesus in unexpected places.

This story also leads us into Lent, a time to listen to hard words from Jesus. They will be words that can transform our lives, if we let them. Words about integrity, about repentance, about crosses, about our religious practices, about God's Love for the world, about death and life. We will be invited to reflect on the true meaning of Love - not a card and box of chocolates - but a giving of oneself for the sake of others, even to the point of death. But if we have seen the Glory of God in the face of Jesus the Christ, then we know that we have strength for the journey, wisdom to discern the way, and love to share

without measure.

Following Jesus may not be easy. The disciples saw Jesus in the white garment of a martyr. By the end of Lent he will be dead, hanging on a cross. But we are told to listen. He has the keys to understand life and living, and he shares them freely that we might have 'life, and have it in all its fullness.'

We all know the story, some know it personally. The father on Christmas Eve madly trying to assemble the gifts for his children. By morning there are parts scattered everywhere. If only he had read the instructions, by now buried somewhere. So we Christians often struggle through life, failing to open the book that contains Jesus' words of instruction. They sound so quaint. Surely it can't be difficult. And we end up frustrated. The answer is simple - Listen to Jesus. Follow him together with others - he put us in community for a reason. And he has given us power, the Holy Spirit, to enable us to do the tasks He sets before us.

We hear so many voices these days. Some are true, some are false, some are simply fluff, a waste of time. But when we hear the voice of Jesus - WOW! He offers us a purpose in life with joy and peace. That is my testimony, and the testimony of many in our church and in the world around us. So give him a chance, listen and follow, perhaps in a new way. Your life will be blessed beyond your imagination. You will find true life. Amen.