

“Listen to Him”
Luke 9:28-36 (37-43a)

Today is the last Sunday before Lent, 40 days before Easter plus six Sundays. This Sunday is called Transfiguration Sunday.

One day Jesus took his close disciples, Peter, John and James, onto a mountain to pray there. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed and his clothes flashed white like lightning. There he was talking to Moses and Elijah, two big figures in the Old Testament. Moses and Elijah were also clothed with heavenly splendor and were talking with Jesus about his exodus from this world, which was about to be fulfilled in Jerusalem. Peter and the other two disciples had fallen asleep. (sounds familiar, doesn't it? Jesus was praying and his close disciples fell asleep. Where did it happen? Yes. In the garden of Gethsemane.) But when they woke up, they saw Jesus' glory and the two men standing with him. They were awe-stricken. As Moses and Elijah were starting to leave, Peter, not knowing what to say, blurted out, “Master, it's wonderful for us to be here! Let's make three shelters as memorials -- one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

As he was saying this, a cloud came over them, and the disciples were terrified. From the cloud they heard a voice: “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.” When the voice finished, Jesus was there alone. The disciples didn't tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

Moses and Elijah are the two big figures in the Old Testament. Moses stands for the Law, since he received what? Yes, the Ten Commandments. Where? Yes, at Mt. Sinai. The Ten Commandments were the foundational laws, rules, of the Jewish community after the Exodus from Egypt. When Moses received the Ten Commandments from God on Mt. Sinai and came down to the ground where the people had been waiting for his return, his face was shining because he had been talking with God.

What does Elijah stand for? Prophecy. What did the prophets do? Contrary to popular thinking, prophets did not necessarily predict the future. Prophets received special revelations from God for the good of the people, and were called to share it, however challenging it might have been.

Elijah's predominant message from God was to encourage the people of Israel to return to God and stop worshipping Baal, a pagan Canaanite god. He risked and feared for his life, for God's message was not always well-received. Do you remember how the town people of Nazareth treated Jesus when he spoke the truth about God's reign of inclusiveness? Yes, we heard that last Sunday. They chased him out of the town and tried to push him off a cliff.

Each time Elijah seemed doomed, God met him in a wonderful, powerful way and encouraged him to move on. Elijah is the one, who heard God's voice in a whisper. Elijah fled out of town, fearing for his life, for Jezebel, King Ahab's wife was after his life. While he hid in a cave, God came to Elijah. God was not in fire, not in earthquake, not in a mighty wind either. But God came in the still, small voice of calm.

So when Peter, John and James saw their master, Jesus standing and speaking with Moses and Elijah, they must have thought that their teacher was a very special man of God, equal to or on the same level with Moses and Elijah. The voice they heard said, however, "This is **my Son**, whom I have chosen." Jesus is not equal to Moses and Elijah. He is more than that. He is **the** son of God, the fulfillment of the Law and Prophecy of the Old Testament.

The Law cannot bring us to salvation, for we are all in short of something. We are not perfect. We cannot fulfill the Ten Commandments with our hearts, even "thou shall not kill." We may not actually kill someone with our hands, but we may injure others with the words we say without being aware of it. We do not love our God fully all the time and do not love our neighbors as God does. The law only shows how we fall short of God's glory.

Even though we try to live a holy life, guided by the words of God, or by those who speak God's words to us, as the prophets did, we fall short. However hard we try, the "holy life" we try to lead does not bring us to salvation.

Salvation comes in Jesus, the Son of God, who offered his life as he taught, ministered to people and died on the cross for us. Salvation comes through Grace, not through the Law or prophecy. The Good News comes from Jesus. The Good News is Jesus.

So the voice from the cloud said, "Listen to **Him, Jesus, my Son.**"

On the mountain Jesus, Moses and Elijah talked about Jesus' departure from the earth in Jerusalem. It is about the events that would take place in Jerusalem as Jesus and his disciples headed towards the city - his suffering, death on the cross and resurrection.

We will start our walk to Jerusalem from this Wednesday, Ash Wednesday. We are starting our Lenten journey toward the cross. As we do, let us remember the words from the cloud, "Listen to Him." "Listen."

Lent is a time of reflection. As we start our Lenten journey, let us listen – pause and listen— take time and listen. Listen to the words of God during our daily devotion. Maybe pause in the beginning of the day, inviting God to guide our day. Pause during the day to take a couple of or several deep breaths to refresh us with the breath of God and be aware of the Holy One with us.

Let us listen to the sound around us, whether birds, clicking of the clocks, cars passing by, music lovely to our ears and see what happens when we listen to them. Is there any message from God here?

Let's listen to our bodies during Lent. If our body or specific parts of our body can speak, what might they say? We don't often listen to our bodies, don't we? We push, push, and push our bodies to get things done. What are our bodies saying to us? Can we honor the voice in our bodies?

Listen to what others are saying behind their words – crying for help, begging for understanding, desiring to be a part of community and yearning to be accepted and loved.

Let us listen to the desires of our hearts instead of squashing them away. Let us acknowledge and listen to them, and see what they are saying and bursting to tell us.

If we do all those listening, I am sure we will hear "still small voice" or "loud voice" from God – God's invitation to see what is happening here, what our next step is or how we can be.

Let's remember that the voice of our Holy One is the voice of Grace, whose intention is our restoration to wholeness. If we keep listening to the Voice throughout Lent, who knows? We may be transformed some way in the end of our Lenten journey. May it be so with you and with me.

Amen.