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The Transfiguration of Our Lord

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“Listen to Him!”

Text: Luke 9:28-36; Deuteronomy 34:1-12

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!”

Those words must have been a shock to Peter, James, and John. And not just the fact that they heard them coming from out of a cloud. But here they are, seeing this amazing scene - Jesus, shining with a glory unlike anything in this world, and Moses and Elijah appearing with Him. And seeing this, Peter wants to stay and wants them to stay and to bask in this glory for a while. But it is not to this that they are to pay attention. This sight is wonderful, yes; but there is something even more important. *Listen to Him*, the Father says. That’s what He wants them to do. Words, not visions. Ears, not eyes.

For if they had been listening and not *heavy with sleep*, what they would have heard is not Jesus, Moses, and Elijah bantering with some small talk; idle chit chat. How’s your mom? How are things going? No, it was not small talk, but *big* talk. About Jesus’ *departure*. And not His departure from this glory or this mountain, but *His departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem*.

We heard about Moses’ departure in the Old Testament reading this morning, how he got to see the Promised Land and all its beauty, but could not go in. And how he died like we die and was buried in an unmarked grave. There would be no memorial to Moses; no pilgrimages to his grave. But though he could not enter this Promised Land, he did enter another, a greater one, where he would never have to leave.

And some years, on this Transfiguration Sunday, we hear about Elijah’s departure in the Old Testament reading, and how he did not die like Moses, but was taken up to heaven in a glorious whirlwind, after fiery chariots and horsemen separated him and Elisha, who would take over for him. No grave or memorial for him either.

But they weren’t talking about those departures, but Jesus’ - the one He was about to accomplish **on the cross**. And perhaps they were talking not just about that, but also about how there would be no grave or memorial for Jesus either. For though He would be buried, soon after that His grave would be empty - nothing there to remember or take a

pilgrimage to go see. And He would bodily ascend into heaven like Elijah - but wouldn't need a whirlwind do to it. Death would not be able to hold Jesus, which is why it could not hold Moses or capture Elijah either. And also why it will not hold you. To do this is what He was chosen for. He is the ***Chosen One***, sent to defeat sin and death with His death, and rise so that you rise . . . to life, in a Promised Land. And only the glorious Son of God could accomplish that.

That's what they needed to listen to, for soon they would be back on a mount with Jesus and with two others - but instead of two prophets, it would be two criminals. Jesus' appearance would be altered that day too - *hideously*. His body torn open from flogging, His head torn open by thorns, His hands and feet pierced with nails, and His holy, precious blood pouring out onto a sin-cursed earth. They would see that, too, but not want to stay. No tents that day. They would hide together, in a room, behind locked doors, in fear. The glory of the transfiguration a distant memory.

But if they had listened they would have known - *this was glorious too*. The glory of the Creator dying for His creation. The glory of God's love which could not leave His children in their sin. You could not see that, at Golgotha. All you could see was death, hatred, blood, hopelessness. The transfiguration turned inside out. No vision of glory here.

But if you *listened* . . . *Father, forgive them* (Luke 23:34). . . . *Today, you will be with me in paradise* (Luke 23:43). Glorious words. Transfiguring words. Words which reveal the glory that is hidden. So notice what's going on here: **In glory, Jesus speaks of death, and in death, He speaks of glory**. And so we are told: ***Listen to Him!***

Good advice. That when you see glory in this world, or when glory comes upon you, to know that death will not be far behind. This glory will not last.

But in the same way, when you see death, or when death comes upon you, to know that in Jesus, glory is not far away. Your death will not last, is not the end. You, too, will live.

Listen to Him. In the highs and the lows, in the good times and the bad times, in glory or in shame, when you feel cursed or when you seem blessed, when the wind is at your back or in your face . . . ***Listen to Him***. His promises. His Word which is the solid foundation we need to understand right; to avoid the roller coaster emotions and troubles of life. His Word which assures us that that in Him is life for the dead, forgiveness for sinners, comfort for the mourning, strength for the weak, love for the unloved, glory for your shame, care for the distressed. Jesus has what you need and will provide.

But as I say so often, that does not mean a life free from trouble - the devil is always lurking and eager to pounce, and we are pretty good at getting ourselves into sin and trouble, flirting with temptations and evil and getting burned. So no, you will not have a

life free from trouble, but you have a Saviour who didn't stay on the Mount of Transfiguration in His glory, but who came down to be with you in the trials and travails of life. A Saviour who was born as you are born, lived as you live, and died as you die, so that you rise as He rose, and live and He lives - confidently, triumphantly, and eternally.

So was Peter foolish for wanting to stay there, on the mountain, with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, in glory? Well, no, not so much foolish - it was *unnecessary*. **They didn't have to stay with Him - He came to stay with us.**

And He still is. You'll know it if you *listen*. That Jesus is here, for His Word is here. His glorious Word. You see here neither the glory of the transfiguration nor the gory of the cross, but it's the same Word, the same Jesus. For here, too, you hear of His departure. We talk about it every week, all the time. And you hear His words of forgiveness. You eat and drink the Body and Blood of the cross, and His blood washes sinners at this Font. You hear His promises, receive His blessing.

You hear, you know, you believe . . . *so why are we not more like Peter?* Why aren't we eager to stay here? Why are we so easily kept away from this place? Why are we so quickly distracted? Why so heavy with sleep after the things of this world and life have so captured our attention and energy?

Here is your mountain. Not of Transfiguration nor Golgotha, but both. For the glorious one, the crucified one, the risen one, is here for you. ***Listen to Him***. As He forgives you, as He feeds you, as He blesses you. ***Listen to Him***. This is no small talk but big talk. Not better life talk but *new* life talk. Words that create. Words that are steadfast and true. ***Listen to Him***.

And the time will come when you will see. When you will see not Jesus in glory with two prophets, nor Jesus in death with two criminals, but both. You'll see Jesus in glory, *with* the scars of the cross, and with all the saints and angels on the Last Day. And you'll hear joy. The endless alleluia of heaven.

But until that day, ***listen to Him***. In the highs and the lows, in the good times and the bad times, in glory or in shame, when you feel cursed or when you seem blessed, when the wind is at your back or in your face . . . ***Listen to Him***.

And ***listen*** as we put our alleluia away today, and enter the season of Lent and begin our journey to the cross. As we hear of our sin and repent; but even more, to hear of our sin *on Him*, to hear our death slay Him, to hear our curse condemn Him. And then most of all, to hear His love that would do all that, take all that, and believe. Believe that in Him your sin is forgiven, in Him your curse is taken away, in Him your death is not the end, and in Him you are a glorious son of God. You can't see that, but you'll hear it.

Listen to Him. For you won't hear it from anyone else. And no one else can give you as much.

Listen to Him. These are the words you need to hear.

Listen to Him. For when you do, and when the time for your departure comes, then you will depart . . . from this place and from this life . . . in peace.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.