

Daily Discipleship

Transfiguration (B) – Mark 9:2-9

An Attitude of Discipleship: *Listening to Jesus*

Focus Question: *How does a disciple listen to Jesus?*

word of life

“This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him.” Mark 9:7 (NRSV)

Read Mark 9:2-9 aloud.

1. *As the verses are read aloud, listen closely for familiar phrases. What do you hear?*

The story of the Transfiguration of Jesus is the closing “book-end” to the season of Epiphany. Just as the season begins with the heavens opening and a voice proclaiming Jesus as God’s Beloved at his baptism, this season of revelation – Epiphany – concludes with a similar divine revelation and the heavenly voice again revealing Jesus as God’s Son, the Beloved.

The location of the story is significant. Jesus and three of his disciples go up a high mountain apart, by themselves (vs. 2). In the cosmology of ancient Israel, the mountains stood as pillars holding up the dome of the sky. The mountain was symbolically the place of God’s revelation. Moses went up to Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34). It is the place where God’s voice is heard.

As they are on the mountaintop, Jesus is transfigured; his appearance becomes dazzling white. Clearly, the disciples are experiencing a mountaintop moment!

2. *Have you ever had a “mountaintop moment?” Describe it.*

The disciples then see two other figures – Moses and Elijah. Both were expected to return as a sign of the coming Messiah. Both represent the key elements of the Old Testament: Moses, the giver of the Law, the author of the first five books of Scripture; and Elijah, the great prophet taken by a whirlwind into heaven. And here they are, both are talking with Jesus. The law and the prophets are being fulfilled in Jesus.

What is a person to do in the midst of such terrifying splendor? Peter had an idea: build three dwellings for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Dear Peter! He always wants to *do* something. One could almost imagine Peter if he were here today wanting to take a photo of the event to remember it. The writer of Mark is almost apologetic for Peter’s words: “he did not know what to say, for they were terrified” (vs. 6).

3. *How do we try to “capture” mountaintop moments?*

A voice is then heard. The words echo the words spoken at Jesus’ baptism; but there are two differences. The words spoken at the baptism were directed to Jesus: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well-pleased.” (Mark 1:11 NRSV) In contrast, on the mountain of the Transfiguration, the words are spoken to the disciples: “This is my Son, the Beloved” (Mark 9:7 NRSV). And then another phrase is added, “Listen to him!” (Mark 9:7)

What are the disciples to do in the presence of Jesus, God’s Beloved? Listen! The verb tense of the word is a present imperative, implying a continuing action: “Keep on listening to him.” It is a word to be heard by disciples of every place and time. Keep on listening to Jesus!

word *among us*

The annual congregational meeting was spirited. A divisive issue was before the gathered group, with seemingly no resolution. Speaker after speaker raised issues and concerns; each point of view was presented more passionately than the previous one. Emotions were high; tension was mounting.

1. *Does this scenario sound familiar?*
2. *How do you deal with differences in your congregation?*

Quietly, an older man sitting in the back of the room slowly rose to his feet. He didn't raise his hand; he didn't need to. He was a patriarch in the church, a faithful disciple who had shown his love for his church and his Lord in a life of quiet service. His stately demeanor commanded the group's attention. "Listen," he began, "Listen to what you are saying and doing to one another. Is this what we are called to be as followers of Jesus?" He spoke softly in simple phrases, reminding the members of their calling and mission. Then he quietly sat down.

3. *Have you experienced a person of quiet authority? Describe.*

An uncomfortable silence followed his words. Finally, someone said, "Let's pray about it and try to hear what God is calling us as a congregation to do." A moment of silent prayer was followed by someone leading the group in the praying the Lord's Prayer. After the "Amen" was spoken in unison, the president of the congregation suggested, "Let's begin the conversation again. Now I think we're ready to listen to each other's point of view."

4. *Why was the congregation ready to listen after a time of prayer?*
5. *What difference does prayer make?*

Several years ago, a Wall Street financial agency used the catch phrase in their ad campaign, "When we (the agency) talk, people listen." If only we would apply that phrase to ourselves and our discipleship. How often do we charge into decisions and situations without taking time to listen, to pray, and to discern God's presence and will? How often do we hurriedly rush to *do* something without allowing time to hear another's point of view? Like Peter in our gospel story, we so readily rush into decisions, not realizing the power and presence of Christ in our midst, not seeking clarity from God as to what we should be doing.

6. *What are some ways to listen to Jesus?*

The heavenly voice speaks to us now just as it did on the Mount of Transfiguration: "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!"

Prayer

Holy and gracious Lord, help us, in all of life's moments, to listen to you. Amen

Dig Deeper

Romans 10:14-17

last word

Each day this week,
find ways
to listen to God.



Daily Discipleship

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

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