

The Sunday before Lent

Collect: Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Psalm 50.1–6:

- ¹ The Lord, the most mighty God, has spoken and called the world from the rising of the sun to its setting.
- ² Out of Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth; our God comes and will not keep silence.
- ³ Consuming fire goes out before him and a mighty tempest stirs about him.
- ⁴ He calls the heaven above, and the earth, that he may judge his people:
- ⁵ 'Gather to me my faithful, who have sealed my covenant with sacrifice.'
- ⁶ Let the heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge.

2 Corinthians 4.3–6: And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Gospel: Mark 9.2–9: Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!' Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Reflection – Listening to Jesus:

Have you ever walked into a situation where the best thing that you could ever say was nothing at all? I'm sure at some point in our life we have all suffered from "Foot in Mouth" disease. Sometimes the words slip out faster than we can realize just what it is we are saying.

As a prerequisite to ordination, candidates are required to go before the Bishops Advisory Panel and go through interviews on different topics. These interviews will lead this panel to decide if the candidate is recommended for training, or if more growth is needed in the person's life. It can be a very nerve-wracking experience.

Prior to my own ordination, I went before the BAP. The interviewer asked me to take a seat. As I was preparing to sit down, she said, "I have your chair wired so I can fry you when you say something I do not like."

At this point, conventional wisdom would say, "Just laugh! It's a joke!" I've never really listened to conventional wisdom, so as I was being seated; I looked over at her and said, "Well, it's a good thing I am wearing my rubber underwear today." She laughed and I sat in my chair red-faced because of what I had just said at the beginning of my interview.

It's amazing how many times we can just spout off the first thing that pops into our heads when a situation calls for nothing to be said at all. We were taught that the best counsellors do more listening than interjecting their own thoughts and ideas in any given situation.

Peter was a man who was like that. Sometimes he would say some brilliant things. Then the times would arise when he would spout off and totally miss the point. What he, and the other disciples, failed to do was to stop long enough and listen to what Jesus was saying.

I had a teacher colleague at a secondary school that would always tell the classes he has that there was a difference between hearing what he had to say and listening to what he had to say. To hear somebody means the sounds that are made enter into the ear canal. Listening is taking in what we hear and focusing on it.

To find out what this Scripture has to say to us, we need to look at this all in the context of what was taking place. Jesus and the twelve have just crossed the Sea of Galilee and are on the Greek side of the lake. While here, Jesus has performed many of the same miracles that He had on the Jewish side. There were people healed from ailments and illnesses, demons cast out, etc. Up to this point, Peter had declared Jesus as the Christ, and once again, Jesus had said He was going to die, again.

A lot of this may have become easily lost amongst the Disciples. They have seen Jesus feed thousands before. They've witnessed blind people regaining their sight before. Jesus did these things on such a frequent basis; perhaps they were once again missing the point. Even His ever present, "I'm going to die, boys." may have been wearing thin. No matter what the case, they heard all Jesus had to say, but that doesn't mean they were listening. In fact, Jesus said something about this that would be clearer after He rises from the dead, but...

We too can fall into that trap. Some of us have been in church enough to hear many of the same messages over and over again. When we opened our Bibles, the "Mount of Transfiguration" passage is so familiar, maybe some of you thought, "I've heard it before. I'm doing all right. When is lunch, anyway?" That's called hearing, but not listening. We can sometimes become so enthralled with our own lives that we miss what Christ may be trying to say to us in the service.

Despite it all, Jesus takes three with Him to stand on the mountain with Him, and that's when all their lives will be changed. What a thing to be a part of! Can you imagine what it would be like to be there on that hill? There was Jesus in all His heavenly glory. Not only that, but there also stood the two heroes of Hebrew culture. I mean, it's not every day that you get to see Moses and Elijah! That kind of thing would render a person speechless! Well, almost.

Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) (*Mark 9:5,6*) Fortunately, God had a better plan for the guys who have just witnessed this event, despite what Peter said. Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" (*Mark 9:7*)

I don't know about you, but I can almost hear the love in God's voice. THIS IS MY SON!!! I know when I get to talk about how Calum is doing in school or about how he is, I do so with the utmost pride. He is MY boy. No matter what he does, that pride is there. That's what I envision God like in this passage.

With that love, the disciples are told to listen to Jesus. Not just hear what He has to say, but to truly listen to Him. It doesn't matter if He repeats Himself, listen to Him. You probably missed it the first time, so listen again. By God's own endorsement, He was telling the three there on that hill, and us today, that Jesus is worth listening to because His message is even greater than the two men there. This is the Son of God... He is worth listening to.

How does that apply to us today? Look at it this way, if you will: the Lord still has a lot to say to us today. We have not heard it all or lived it all. There are many times when the best thing for us to do in a situation is not to speak first and ask questions later. Often times we should just quiet ourselves and listen to what He says to us.

I will be the first to admit that I often struggle in actually listening. There are times that I can totally miss something that someone might say to me, only to have them repeat it over and over again. In that same fashion, there have been times when I have missed what God was saying to me. Maybe I didn't want to hear what He had to say. Perhaps I was too wrapped up in myself and my problems that I drowned Him out. I will also admit and say that I have no idea what Jesus might be saying to you today. But I will say it is worth stopping it all and listening to Him.