

SERMON: THE MT OF TRANSFIGURATION

When I was in high school, I met a little girl named Elaine Zayak. She was tiny and not particularly remarkable in any way.

And then I heard her story. Her father had run over her foot with a lawn mower when she was very young, and cut off three of her toes on her left foot.

I was never sure if I detected a slight limp as she walked – it seemed that there was something different about her gate – a little more awkward perhaps than some. She was a tiny little thing with a pony tail – your typical kid.

I didn't think much of her when I first met her at an ice rink one summer. I used to love figure skating, and someone introduced me to her during a skating session – she held out her hand to me with her ice skate bag slung over her shoulder – I was about seven years older than her in high school – we shook hands and that was that. Cute kid I thought.

But then Elaine hit the ice – any awkwardness or diminutiveness vanished. It was as if she were transformed. If I was on the ice when she got on, I would stop at the side of the rink, and simply watch her. We all did. (Show VIDEO)

She took the ice with a sense of command and skill that was unparalleled

She was one of the few women skaters at the time who did triple jumps. It was awesome to watch.

Her landing ability was beyond incredible – she nailed those triple jumps every time, all the time. And with three less toes than most of us.

The ice transformed Elaine into someone we stood and simply gawked at.

She went on to skate in the 1984 Olympics and did so many triple jumps that they had to institute the Elaine Zayak rule – only so many triples in one ice competition.

And here I was, in the presence of a future Olympiad and I didn't know it. All I saw was a slightly awkward, tiny little girl with a ponytail...

Until she took the ice and then I just stood and watched in awe.

Today we are going to look at the story of Jesus and what we call his transfiguration.

Until this event happens, and it is recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke – I am not sure that the disciples knew who they were in the presence of....

Yet after this incident, they knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was more than just a nice guy
He was more than a prophet

That day on the mountain when they saw Jesus gleaming white, filled with the glory of God, they were terrified and amazed at Jesus' glory – glory as of the Son of the Father.

Right before this all happens –

Jesus has asked the disciples just before this, “Who do people say that I am?”

And they answer him, some say you are this...some say you are that

Some say you are a prophet...some say you are Elijah come back from the dead

And then Jesus says, “But who do you say that I am?”

He makes it very personal...In essence that’s what *they* think...but now what do you think?

Jesus always makes it very personal...

And then Peter declares his faith – , You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” (Matthew 16:16)

And Jesus commends Peter for this statement – this confession of faith

So its out of *that context* that the story of the Transfiguration then happens

In essence the experience of the Transfiguration of Jesus is Jesus saying, “Yes, that’s exactly who I am, Peter.”

Watch this...

A few days later, Jesus takes his three closest disciples to the top of the mountain – Peter, James and John – in Luke the reason they go up there is to pray.

Here they see Jesus Transfigured, or changed – the word is “**Metemorpho**” – **transform**

His majesty, his glory, his presence, his power, become so brilliant in their presence that they are awe struck
In Mark we have the most emphasis on Jesus becoming brilliantly white ...”His clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.”

And who appears with Jesus? **Moses and Elijah**

Now I want you to think about this...both Moses and Elijah met God on top of a Mountain during their ministry...

This mountain top experience parallels Moses going up to the mountain –

Moses goes up on MT Sinai in Exodus 24 to receive the Law.

Moses got the ten commandments on the mountain...

We learned about that in the first part of THE STORY

Moses represents the law

Elijah on the other hand, **represents the prophets**

And when Elijah becomes discouraged he goes up on a mountain – and the Lord showed himself there to Elijah (1 Kings 19:11) in a still small voice

Both of these appearances of God...happen on a mountain...

Now Jesus’ transfiguration also happens on a mountain

Current scholars believe that the transfiguration probably happened on **Mt Hermon** – to be specific – long thought by both Jews and Arabs to be a sacred mountain. (IMAGE)

The name Hermon is derived from the root *h¹rm* ("sacred")

Mt Hermon is located at the highest point in Israel in northern Galilee- reaching to 9,200 feet above the Mediterranean.

And on this mountain, as close to heaven as you can possibly get... the disciples stood with Jesus, watching in awe as this man whom they talked with, walked with, shared fish dinners with, their friend, their teacher – this Jesus becomes glorified before them...

And leave it to Peter to blurt out something in the moment..”**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.**”

Have you ever just bumbled over your words, when you didn’t know what to say?

When you were in the presence of greatness?

I remember shaking the hand of Leonard Bernstein and instead of stumbling over my words, my throat closed and I couldn’t speak.

Then when I tried my words were all thick and chalky

So I just stood there and smiled like an idiot when everyone around me had something polite or complimentary to say. In that moment, I was just tongue tied.

Peter on the other hand *always* had something to say – good or bad throughout the scripture.

He is always making a comment, extrapolating on a theme
...as we would say today Peter is *an external processor*.
He is terrified on the mountain seeing Jesus brilliant white...so
he starts talking

Some people are like that, right?
My older son is a little like that – he gets scared or tired and
you cannot shut him up – just rambles on and on.

And Peter is like that too
He is terrified...Jesus is blazing white, and there is Elijah and
Moses standing next to him – the ancient patriarchs
Poor terrified Peter says...**This is great that we are
here...hey...Here's an idea...lets make booths for everyone!**

And Mark essentially says, “Peter was talking like an idiot.”

Not only that but in his anxiety about what to say, he equates
Jesus with Moses and Elijah.
as if to negate his former confession that he made, that Jesus
was the Christ, the Son of God

And then God speaks.
It is crystal clear, simple and direct.
It clears up all of Peters stumbling attempts to be helpful

A cloud overshadows all of them and a voice speaks..*the cloud
is always a sign of God presence in scripture*

God's voice speaks and simplifies all of Peter's anxiety and fear into one simple command....

"This is my beloved son...listen to *him!*"

This is the same thing that was said when Jesus was baptized by God. The baptism was a symbol of Jesus' death, in the context of John saying, 'Behold the Lam of God who takes away the sins of the world'. The transfiguration is a foretaste for the disciples of his glorious resurrection

And when the cloud went away, **The disciples looked around and saw Jesus ONLY.**

This is my beloved son. Listen to him.

You see...

All of this was meant to show the disciples and us that the age of the law and the prophets had come to an end

Jesus was not just another prophet like Elijah, or a lawgiver like Moses

Jesus was God in the flesh

And God says "***Listen to him...***"

The age of listening to God Almighty directly...not through the law and the prophets had come!

Listen just to Jesus! He's enough...no more need for intermediaries

Recognize who you are in the presence of!

Peter! James! John! Do you recognize that he who walks with you, and with whom you eat, and drink is the one who existed in the beginning?

**Who created the world? Who created you?
Who is full of glory and light and power and has dominion over everything?**

Listen to him!

Its ironic that after this glorious experience Jesus then goes down the mountain and is confronted with a boy possessed by demons and no one can cast them out.

So Jesus commands them out, and the demons listen to him They leave the boy, showing us again Jesus complete triumph and victory over evil – doing what only God can do.

Evil knew it was in the presence of the glory of God himself, and could not stand.

And Jesus says, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I have to bear with you?” He just experienced heaven on the mountain, and now he has to come down the mountain and deal again with all the pain and brokenness of this life....

Sometimes the pain and brokenness of this life gets to us too
And yet lets not forget who is with us today
Lets not forget whom we are in the presence of when we worship
We are in the presence right now of the resurrected Christ
He is alive, and available to us...

You know, God could have said a lot of other things in that moment on the mountain...

Maybe this is my beloved son...“follow him”...“do what he does”...“write it all down”...“make a monument”...“prepare a sacrifice”

NO

God says none of this

God says these three simple words...“Listen to him..”

Listen to Jesus

Last week was the Sunday after Easter and I talked to you about the fact that God was a God of the NOW

His resurrection means that we can pause in our day – no matter what we are doing – and practice his presence

I asked you how often you paused during your day, in the midst of activity and clamour, to intentionally bring God to mind – and maybe if you did it for 6 seconds...

I suggested maybe you make it 8

I challenged you to write to me and tell me when and if you did this...what your experience was like...bringing God into the moment

And then I told you, that if you wrote to me, you would get a free book – Practicing the Presence of God

I got about 8 responses and...

I am going to extend that offer to you for another week

And this time as you bring God into your situation – work, home, driving, cooking, cleaning, line at Target, line at Starbucks, I'd invite you to intentionally try to listen...listen to Him

So much else in our day clamors for our attention

We listen to TV, radio, voices in a crowd, news, sports announcers, marketing gimmicks,
In fact there is so much noise we now wear earphones a lot of the time to listen to what we want to listen to, and block out what we don't want to hear...

So for the next week I am asking you to **put on your spiritual earphones...to drown out the other noises and Focus on listening to Jesus whenever you can**
Write to me and tell me about it...

God is a great communicator and is always trying to get our attention

But we need to train ourselves to hear his still small voice

This takes practice...and sometimes it is hard...but it is worth training our hearts and minds to do this because we are in the presence of greatness right now

The risen glorified Christ is with us...

Don't you want to hear what he has to say?

I read something once from a writer who said the following:

*I remember one evening sitting on the back porch enjoying a meal with a group of friends. Caught up in all the conversation and laughter, I stopped for a moment and focused on the background noise. I realized that there were thousands of crickets and any number of other bugs making a racket in the trees and bushes all around us. **Sounds I only heard as I purposed to listen for them.***

That's why the book I want to give you is called **PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD**. Intentionality to listen is key... ..but it **takes practice to hear Jesus in a very noisy distracted world** – as anything worthwhile takes practice.

And God speaks to us in many different ways.

Those of you who made the effort to write to me last week...thank you!

One of you made this comment when you wrote...

Jesus is there for us and he makes a difference for each one of us if we just think about it. Because He is here, we can be changed."

Because he is here, we can be changed. Others can be changed. Our world can be changed. So lets not forget in whose presence we live and move and have our being – in whose presence transformation happens.

Listen to him.

Lets pray and lets listen...

I'd like you to grow quiet in your spirit and imagine yourself on that mountain with Jesus

And hearing the voice of God say to you "This is my beloved son. Listen to Him."

And in your heart simply respond to that command with an open eagerness to know what God wants to communicate to you right now...

Give yourself some space in the clutter of all that may be going on in your life...and simply surrender and say....

"Lord I am listening. I quiet myself before you. My spiritual earphones are on, my heart is adjusted to the rhythms of your grace. Speak to me now...I will to listen...I want to hear your voice."

Allow the Lord to speak...in these next few moments...

