

Listen to the Master's Voice.

Text: Mark 9:2-9

1) Life In A World Of Competing Voices

Suggested Hymns:

2) The Master's Voice Is Worth Listening To

147, 273, 37, 371, 41

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Mark 9:2-9, ² *Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them.* ³ *His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.* ⁴ *And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.*

⁵ *Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" --* ⁶ *because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.*

⁷ *And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"* ⁸ *Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.* ⁹ *Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

One of the fine arts of life is the art of listening. You may have an acute sense of hearing but the question is, *Are you really able to listen?*

Careful listening is more than merely hearing sounds. Listening opens the door to meaningful communication. It enhances our ability to understand ideas and the feelings of others.

A large firm prides itself in the fact that when the CEO speaks, people sit up and listen. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could make the same statement about God? In the Gospel for today the living voice of God speaks to us.

But a nagging question persists, When God speaks, who listens? Let's put it more pointedly. When God speaks, do you listen?

St. Mark's account of the transfiguration does much more than recall an important event in the Saviour's life. Here is a modern day challenge that confronts all who profess to walk by faith in Christ. It urges us to do more than just hear our Lord's words. It calls us to become involved in a creative activity, - to Listen to the *Master's Voice*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Life In A World Of Competing Voices

In every period of history God's people are confronted by a host of voices that compete for their attention. Frequently the messages are confusing, and trying to make some sense out of everything we hear is just not easy. There are voices on the radio, TV and internet competing for your attention.

Life for the disciples was like that, too. They faced a steady barrage of conflicting views about God and the life of faith. Our Lord spent much of His time trying to help them sort it all out by teaching them about the kingdom of God.

He made the word of the prophets come alive as He opened the Scriptures for them. Repeatedly He urged them not simply to hear, but to listen to the Good News — to take it to heart, to let it change their lives.

Just a few days before the Saviour led the disciples up the mountain to the transfiguration site, He told them of coming events, ³¹ ***And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.*** St. Mark emphasises that Jesus said this plainly and openly.¹

The Saviour's voice is worth listening to. On the transfiguration mountain the meaning of many things the Lord had been saying should have struck home for the disciples. Before their very eyes Peter, James, and John saw the Lord ***transfigured before them.*** ³ ***His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like***

snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. ⁴And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.

Everything about the transfiguration event calls attention to the importance of listening to the Master's voice. Besides the dazzling garments, there were voices that penetrated the silence. They were the voices of great men of old — Moses and Elijah. They too had once lived in a world of conflicting voices. They had heard voices of unbelief, and voices that mocked God. But they had also heard the voice of God.

Moses had been struck with awe as he stood before a bush that did not cease to burn, and he had listened to the voice of God calling him away from the herding of sheep to the challenging task of leading a nation. On Mt. Sinai he had heard the voice of God again as He announced His covenant with the people and gave the Ten Commandments.

Elijah, afraid and despairing, had listened to the voice of God on the same mountain. That voice came to him, not in a violent wind nor in an earthquake, but in the stillness. It was the steady voice of God that penetrates the world's noise and brings an important Word to the ears of men.

Imagine the disciples at the transfiguration listening to the conversation of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. This was worth listening to; it would have been deeply impressed in their memories.

But here St. Mark reports something interesting, something so common to us all, *they were greatly afraid*. Fear got in the way of listening. Groping for words, bewildered by the experience, all that Peter can do is blurt out, "*Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah*".

Peter got sidetracked from the task of listening. He wanted to preserve the mountaintop experience, to make the precious moment permanent by building structures. But God had other ideas. From out of the cloud that overshadowed Peter and the others there came another voice. Clearly, unmistakably, this was a voice to be reckoned with. It demanded a hearing: "*This is My beloved Son; listen to Him.*" It was the voice of God calling them, as He calls people of every age, to listen to the voice of His only begotten Son.

The voice of Jesus is the voice of the Good Shepherd. He speaks with authority because His words are true. In a world of noise and confusion He brings Good News to those who are bombarded by claims that the way to God is the way of works, of struggling with the Law, and of striving for personal goodness. His way is through the cross, through suffering and death, through resurrection.

Competing and conflicting voices often garble and mask the voice that we really need to hear. On the way to the church each morning a pastor travels past the towers of a local radio station. When the car radio is on, he always knows when he is approaching the towers. The strong signal simply garbles and interferes with whatever station may be playing. It's disconcerting, to say the least, because the scrambled, irritating noise continues until the towers are left behind.

Listening to the voice of God in today's world is a lot like that. Competing voices are in the air. They not only beg for a hearing, but they also tend to garble, muffle, or blot out the voice of God that is heard in the proclamation of the Gospel and sounds forth from the pages of the Scriptures.

Think for a moment of how these mixed voices have distorted the person and work of Christ. People have attempted to explain Jesus theologically, philosophically, psychologically, and in a host of other ways. They have asserted that He was a mere man, a good teacher, a hoax, and a con artist. But in the voice from the cloud at the transfiguration there was no complicated explanation, just the clear, unmistakable message: *“This is My beloved Son; listen to Him.”*

2. The Master's Voice Is Worth Listening To

When our Lord speaks, His voice is worth listening to, not simply because He is speaking, but also because He has something extremely worthwhile to say. He talks about life and work in the world, about rescue from our sins and friendship with God, about hope and a future that reaches beyond the grave.

What a word for the disciples who would have to face the reality of life down in the valleys and along the dusty, crowded streets of the cities! The site of the transfiguration could be no permanent home in spite of their personal desires. God had work — rewarding and challenging work — for Peter, James, and John

to do. The first step was for them to pay attention, and to listen to the Master's voice.

What would happen in your life and in our world if we would seriously practice the fine art of listening to the many important things our Saviour has to say? If we began each day by taking to heart the message of the cross that He shares with us? Would we not be less fearful, less confused by other voices, and more able to deal with the world's confusing noise?

How much more peaceful our lives might be if our hearts and minds were finely tuned to the voice of Jesus who says, ***“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give them eternal life.”***²

Listening to the Master's voice would help us understand the deeper meaning of the Saviour's words written in Mark 8:34-36, ***“Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ³⁵ “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”***

You may remember seeing the old corporate seal of the RCA company on some of their record labels, or the HMV logo on audio equipment. It pictures an old record player with a big horn from which the sound emanates. A dog sits in front of the horn listening intently, and below are the words, ***“His Master's Voice.”*** Isn't this what our Lord emphasised that day in the home of Mary and Martha?

We read in Luke 10:39-42, ***Mary, ... sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” ⁴¹ And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. ⁴² “But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”***

People frequently engage in small talk, filling up time and space with words that don't really matter. God never just makes small talk. He always has significant things to say. What He says matters; it is worth listening to.

However, the fact that God is speaking and has important things to say about life doesn't make the task of listening any easier.

Our Lord was aware of the difficulty we have, and so He punctuated His teaching with the words, ***“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”***³

The shallow thinking of our time and the difficulty that people have in listening to the Master's voice is seen in the willingness of some to believe that one voice is as good as another. Every person certainly has the right to choose what to listen to, what to believe or not believe. But it is also true that every choice has its own risks and consequences.

The idea that every religious road will ultimately lead to the discovery of the one God simply isn't true. Theological truth is not relative. One view about God is not just as good as another. We must listen to the Master's voice precisely because what He says has eternal significance.

Only His voice tells of God who sent His Son to save us from sin and death. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and ***“there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”***⁴ A person may have the best of intentions and be completely sincere, but to believe that just any view about God will open the gates of heaven is equally as unreasonable as believing that any liquid poured into the fuel tank of your car will make it run.

Upsetting events and hard experiences of life may press in on us. Competing, contradictory, and distracting voices may confuse us as we face life's sometimes bewildering madness. The self-seeking life-style of many people would suggest that life must always be filled with “gusto.”

Listen to the gentle voice of the Master who invites you to take up your cross and follow Him. Crass self-indulgence is not really living. Security and hope for the days to come are not simply by-products of “something to believe in” — no matter what it may be. Listen to the voice of Jesus who said in John 8:31-32, ***“If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”***³² ***“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”***

As we move through these holy days, we need not despair. The voice of God is still to be heard. No noisy or boisterous voices shall overcome the sure, still, yet strong voice of the Lord.

Luther and the other reformers offer good advice, *“Let the man who would hear God speak read Holy Scripture.”* As we daily search the Scriptures, we will hear the living voice of Him who calls us sons and daughters. This is the voice of a loving and gracious Father who does not despise a broken and contrite heart. By the power of His holy Spirit He opens our ears so that we can listen to the Master’s voice. May we all be attentive listeners. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Mark 8:31-32

² John 10:27-28

³ Luke 14:35

⁴ Acts 4:12