

18<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time (Father Mark Starr)

The Transfiguration of the Lord

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 9

2 Peter 1:16-19

Matthew 17:1-9

Who am I listening to today? “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” Today in the feast of the celebration of the Transfiguration, Matthew narrates the moment when Jesus takes three of his disciples: Peter, James and John, up the mountain where he is transfigured before them – he becomes dazzling white and Elijah and Moses appear speaking to Jesus. And finally they hear the voice of the Father: “This is my beloved son.”

Peter says it is well for us to be here, it is good for us to be here. Let us construct three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. Why would he say that? Anybody here have any idea why Peter would say let me construct three tents? Nobody? Okay I know somebody who heard my homily last night. It was the feast of tabernacles. There were three major Jewish feasts. There’s Passover. We know about Passover, right? And then 50 days later there’s the feast of cereal or first fruits, Pentecost, okay? And then in the 7<sup>th</sup> month, there is the feast of tabernacles. So that’s the feast that the Jews would celebrate after the end of the harvest. After all their harvest had come in. And during the 7 days of the celebration they would go out and they would construct these tents out in the wilderness out in the desert or outside and they would dwell in these tents. It would be like father/son day, okay, the fathers would take the sons out and you’d have this little camping out there. And what it was was to remind the Jews of the wandering through the desert for 40 years. So it would make sense. It’s at the end of this celebration. The feast of tabernacles. If you do the timeframe in the Gospels, on the last day of the feast of tabernacles and that is why Peter says let us construct three tents here: one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. He didn’t just think oh it might be a good idea to set up three tents. There was a reason for that. It was a culture, a custom there. The celebration.

The mountain and the voice of the Lord. The mountain certainly conjures up remembrances of the importance of the mountain in the history of Israel. Moses ascends the mountain to receive the stone tablets and he speaks to the Lord. Elijah, the prophet, is commanded by the Lord to go up the mountain for the Lord will pass by and he recognizes the Lord in that small, still voice. Jesus himself experiences one of his greatest temptations from a high place. Throw yourself down from this high place. Jesus goes up the mountain to give the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew’s Gospel, in Luke’s Gospel he comes down into the plains, remember? But in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus goes up the mountain and then he delivers the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus ascends the Mount of Olives where he gives his consent to the Father: not my will, but thy will, before his death. And after his resurrection, Jesus ascends into heaven with his disciples looking on from the mountain. The mountain, a place of prayer, a place of instruction and a place to encounter the Lord.

The voice. The voice of the Father: "Listen to him." Indeed the disciples do listen to him, ultimately all of them giving their lives for his sake. In all four Gospel accounts in Jesus' Baptism, we hear these words, "This is my beloved son." And today we hear these words again. "This is my beloved son. Listen to him." Listening entails more than just hearing the words. How many children here, when you don't do something that your parents ask you to do, your parents will respond to you "Did you hear me? Did you hear me?" It didn't just mean did you hear the words, and go on your way. It entails more than that. Listening entails also doing and responding. Do we listen and respond? Or do we just say Yeah Father that was a good homily message and just go on my way and do whatever I want the rest of the week. Right. Is that what we do? We are called to listen to the voice and to respond to that voice.

The narrative of the Transfiguration says while they were speaking of Jesus' departure, Elijah and Moses were speaking of Jesus' departure. In that account in Luke's Gospel they were speaking of his departure, his departure from the world. Matthew and Mark narrate Jesus coming down from the mountain after the Transfiguration, says don't say anything to anybody about this until after the Resurrection. Okay. So what's going on here is Jesus is linking the glory of the son of God with his crucifixion. There's both. To experience the glory of God, for Jesus to show his entire glory, also includes the cross. That's the same in our Christian walk as well. Do we want to see, do we want to experience that glory with Almighty God without taking up our cross? We are called to listen to the voice of the Lord and be with him in his glory. So often we just want to share in the fruits of the Gospel without taking on the cross. And in the transfiguration we see there's a linking of the cross with the glory of the son.

I'll give you an example in my life. In my business life ... you all know I was the perfect businessman right, we've been through that one before, right? So I tried to do everything the right way. Well I would have employees several times in the 10 years I owned my business. Had different ones of my employees say, "Hey Mark I think I should have a piece of the company. You know I'm working hard, I should have a part ownership in the company." And I would say "okay that's good. Do you want to stay with me on Friday night when I'm nailing the last shingle on this addition because rain's coming on the way? Do you want to be with me on a Friday night? How about when money is tight and we've got to pay our bills, would you like to go without a paycheck on Friday?" Oh no, I got to have my paycheck. I remember one year out of 52 weeks in one year I think I missed 20 weeks' worth of paychecks in one year. I didn't own the business, it owned me. Regardless so I would look at them and say you want to share in all the fruits but you don't want to make any of the sacrifices. Same thing. Do we want to share in the glory of God without taking up our cross and following him? And that's what we're called to do. Pick up our cross, follow him and then we'll share in that glory. Listen to the voice of the Lord. Is my relationship with God the same way? Do I want to share in that ownership, do I want to share in that glory or do I want to listen and pick up my cross and follow him? And then share in that glory? Who am I listening to today? Or what am I listening to? What drives me? Do I listen and respond to the riches of the world or to the voice of the Lord. Listen to him. Praise be Jesus Christ.