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Mark 9:1-10

Listen to Jesus!

And he said to them, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before (until) they see the kingdom of God come with power." ²After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Peter 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." ⁶(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) ⁷Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" ⁸Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. ⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant.

Last week Jamie and I saw the movie, "New in Town" with Harry Connick Jr. and Renee Zellweger. This movie was fun as it was set in Minnesota (Uff Dah). There is a scene in the movie where Connick's daughter goes on her first date. Once she leaves, he has difficulty breathing and must sit down because he is lightheaded. He grabs his chest and says, "I think I am having a heart attack. Which arm is supposed to hurt? I think both are hurting. Maybe I am having a stoke." It was a funny scene.

In our gospel reading, we find the disciples a bit out of breath. Up to this point, the gospel is advancing. The disciples leave their nets and immediately follow Jesus. Jesus' ministries goes from the synagogue out to Peter's mother-in-law's house. It moves from the house to the city and then to the neighboring cities. People are captivated by Jesus' teaching. He has authority over the sick and demon possessed.

Could you imagine how fun it was for those disciples? They are young. They have been with Jesus as he teaches, heals, exorcises demons, and turns the world upside down. The disciples have hope for the first time in their lives.

Everything changes in chapter 8 as Jesus begins to teach about his death. Verse 31 says, "He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again" (8:31).

Talk about punch to the stomach. This isn't what the disciples signed up for. No wonder Peter rebuked Jesus (8:32). I can imagine what Peter said. "Jesus, if you preach like this you will surely lose your following. Jesus, you cannot die, we are only beginning to live. We have hope. You cannot take this away from us. Even more, this does not jive. How can you teach with authority (unlike the scribes) and yet be duped by them? How can you have power over demons and yet be a victim to their plots?"

This then is the context to the transfiguration. Let me highlight some of the key words to the passage.

- Verse 1 – Jesus tells his disciples that “some of them” will see kingdom of God come with power.
- Verse 2 – Jesus takes them up a “high mountain”, thus they are in the realm of heaven.
- Verse 2 - Jesus is transfigured (literally, morphed) before their eyes.
- Verse 4 - Elijah and Moses are there (both had mountain top experiences with God).
- Verse 5 – Peter wants to build shelters (tabernacles). It was in the wilderness where Israel had the tabernacle and God filled it with his glory.
- Verse 7 - A cloud surrounds them (like the cloud in the wilderness wondering)
- Verse 8 - God speaks, “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

Talk about a powerful event. The disciples are experiencing an event much like Moses and Elijah experienced. They are seeing the kingdom of God coming with power.

The purpose is to teach the disciples that there is more to Jesus than meets the eye. Jesus is both man and God. This is important because can be both gloried and humiliated. Jesus can accomplish victory even in defeat (the cross).

Moses and Elijah are great testimonies to this. Both had crosses to bear. Moses had a great victory over Egypt only to have the people die in the wilderness. Elijah had a great victory on Mt. Carmel only to flee from Jezebel. In both cases, God was faithful and was glorified through their lives. Even more, God had more in store for them as God was the one who buried Moses and God was the one who took up Elijah in a chariot of fire.

Oh how the disciples need to hear this message. Even though the cross looks like defeat, it is actually victory. Jesus must go to the cross to fully preach the good news (1:1). He cannot simply cast out demons, he has to defeat the devil. He cannot simply heal the sick, he must conquer death. He must lose his life to save our lives. There is more to Jesus than meets the eye.

Could the disciples understand this? No way! How could they? That is why God says, “This is my son, whom I love. Listen to him.” Notice God does not say, “You need to figure this out.” He does not say, “You should know better.” Rather, God simply calls them to listen to Jesus. This is my son whom I love. I trust him. You can trust him as well. Listen to him. There is more to Jesus than meets the eye.

Reformation, we need to listen as well. There are many things happening in our lives that are not pretty. There are many hardships, struggles, addictions and failures that tear the hope out of us. It is at such times that we need to listen to Jesus.

- For you who are alone listen as Jesus says, “Surely I am with you always even to the end of the age.”
- For you who are worried about the economy listen as Jesus says, “Have no fear little flock, it the father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”
- For you who are plague by sin and guilt listen as Jesus says, “Your sins are forgiven.”
- For you who are broken by life listen as Jesus says, “Come unto me all who are weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

- For you who are near death, or have lost a loved one listen as Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believe in Me shall live” (John 11:25).

Listen to Jesus. You can trust him. The father does. Listen to him. There is more to Jesus than meets the eye.

**In Jesus' Name,
Amen**