

Luke 9:28-36

²⁸ Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³⁰ Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. ³¹ They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³ Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. ³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen;^(d) listen to him!" ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

LISTENING, IT IS SUCH A SIMPLE THING, AND YET OFTEN SO HARD TO DO.

I RECALL A TIME IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY CLASS WHEN I WAS SITTING THERE LISTENING TO THE TEACHER, THEN SUDDENLY I WASN'T.

I MUST HAVE HAD A GLAZED LOOK ON MY FACE BECAUSE I CAME BACK TO REALITY WHEN THE TEACHER ASKED ME A QUESTION.

FORTUNATELY, I LIKE HISTORY AND WAS FAMILIAR WITH THE SUBJECT OF THE LESSON.

I ALSO MUST HAVE BEEN LISTENING ON SOME LEVEL-SINCE I CAME UP WITH THE CORRECT ANSWER.

THE EVENT, WHICH HAS STUCK IN MY MIND OVER 50 YEARS LATER, DID TEACH ME THE IMPORTANCE OF REALLY PAYING ATTENTION.

REALLY PAYING ATTENTION TO THE SOUNDS AROUND US AND ESPECIALLY TO THE WORDS BEING SAID TO US IS A CONSTANT CHALLENGE FOR MANY PEOPLE.

THIS REMINDS US THAT EVEN THOUGH PEOPLE OFTEN USE THE WORDS HEARING AND LISTENING AS IF THEY MEAN THE SAME THING, THEY ARE NOT ALWAYS SYNONYMOUS.

PSYCHOLOGIST KELLY WORKMAN WROTE: "THE SAYING 'IN ONE EAR, OUT THE OTHER' SPEAKS TO THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEARING AND LISTENING."

IN OTHER WORDS, HEARING CAN BE DONE PASSIVELY, BUT LISTENING REQUIRES PAYING ATTENTION.

THE OLD TESTAMENT OFFERS PLENTY OF EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE NOT LISTENING TO THE LORD THEIR GOD.

THERE WAS ABRAHAM-WHO KEPT TRYING TO DO THINGS HIS OWN WAY INSTEAD WAITING FOR THE LORD.

AND JONAH, WHO DID NOT LIKE WHAT HE HEARD, HE TRIED TO RUN AWAY FROM GOD.

MANY OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH WOULD NOT LISTEN TO WHAT GOD'S PROPHETS TOLD THEM.

AND EVEN LARGE PARTS OF THE POPULATION INSISTED ON FOLLOWING THEIR OWN WAYS INSTEAD OF GOD'S WAY.

THESE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF EXAMPLES OF HEARING WORDS FROM GOD, BUT NOT LISTENING OR PAYING ATTENTION TO THE MESSAGE.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, THE TWELVE DISCIPLES OF JESUS WERE NOT ALWAYS GOOD AT LISTENING TO HIM.

THEY DID HEAR HIS WORDS, BUT THERE ARE EXAMPLES IN THE GOSPELS THAT SHOW THERE WERE MANY TIMES THEY DID NOT LISTEN ENOUGH SO AS TO GRASP THE MEANING OF WHAT HE WAS TELLING THEM.

IT MIGHT ALSO BE TRUE THAT THERE WERE OTHER TIMES WHEN THE DISCIPLES DID NOT LIKE WHAT JESUS WAS SAYING.

THIS MEANS THAT THEY DID NOT LISTEN TO JESUS IN THE SENSE THEY REJECTED HIS MESSAGE.

FOR EXAMPLE: PRIOR TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION JESUS ASKED HIS DISCIPLES WHAT OTHER PEOPLE WERE SAYING ABOUT HIM.

THEN HE ASKED WHO THEY THOUGHT HE IS, AND PETER SAID "YOU ARE THE CHRIST OF GOD", MEANING THE MESSIAH.

JESUS THEN TOLD THEM HE WOULD HAVE TO SUFFER AND DIE, AND HE REPEATED THAT STATEMENT SEVERAL OTHER TIMES.

BUT IN EACH CASE THE TWELVE EITHER IGNORED OR REJECTED WHAT HE TOLD THEM.

PERHAPS THEY DID NOT LISTEN OR ACCEPT THE MEANING OF WHAT HE TOLD THEM BECAUSE THEY GOT DISTRACTED WHEN THEY LEARNED JESUS WAS THE MESSIAH.

SURELY JESUS ACKNOWLEDGING HIS IDENTITY BROUGHT SOME IMAGES OF GLORY CONCERNING THE THRONE OF DAVID, AND THE ASCENDANCY OF ISRAEL ON THE WORLD STAGE ONCE AGAIN.

THEY MIGHT HAVE IMAGINED JESUS ON THE THRONE AND THEMSELVES AS HIS CLOSET ADVISORS. IN SHORT, THEY THOUGHT ONLY OF WORLDLY GLORY AND REDEMPTION.

THIS IS ONLY SPECULATION, BUT WHAT WE DO KNOW IS THAT NONE OF THE DISCIPLES BELIEVED JESUS WOULD DIE AND BE RAISED TO LIFE AGAIN, LIKE HE TOLD THEM HE WOULD.

THIS BRINGS US TO TODAY'S GOSPEL READING ABOUT THE TIME, SHORTLY BEFORE HIS ARREST AND CRUCIFIXION, JESUS WENT UP A MOUNTAIN, ACCOMPANIED BY PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN.

IT WAS THERE ON THE MOUNTAIN THAT THE THREE WITNESSED SOMETHING AMAZING.

THEY SAW THE FACE AND CLOTHES OF JESUS TRANSFORMED BY A DAZZLING LIGHT SHINING FORTH FROM WITHIN HIM.

THEN MOSES AND ELIJAH APPEARED ALONG SIDE OF JESUS, AND THE THREE SPOKE ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO JESUS IN JERUSALEM.

THE THREE DISCIPLES WERE FILLED WITH AWE TO SEE JESUS GLORIFIED BY THE LIGHT, AS WELL AS BY THE VISION OF MOSES -THE LAW GIVER AND ELIJAH- THE CHIEF PROPHET.

THE SIGHT THEY SAW WAS CERTAINLY SOMETHING GOOD TO SIMPLY BEHOLD RATHER THAN IMMEDIATELY RESPOND TO.

BUT PETER WAS NOT ABLE TO REMAIN INACTIVE OR SILENT. HE INTERRUPTED JESUS' TIME WITH MOSES AND ELIJAH TO SUGGEST THEY SHOULD BUILD THEM A TYPE OF SHRINE.

WE MAY IMAGINE PETER WANTED TO CAPTURE THE MOMENT, OR PERHAPS CREATE A PLACE FOR OTHERS TO COME TO AND SEE JESUS IN HIS GLORY.

THIS SUGGESTS TO US THAT EVEN IF PETER AND THE OTHERS HEARD THE CONVERSATION ABOUT JESUS' DEPARTURE, MEANING HIS DEATH IN JERUSALEM, THEY DID NOT LISTEN.

THEN, NO SOONER IT SEEMS, DID PETER SPEAK THAN A CLOUD OVERSHADOWED THEM.

THE VOICE OF GOD ALMIGHTY SPOKE FROM WITHIN THE CLOUD SAYING, "THIS IS MY SON, MY CHOSEN, LISTEN TO HIM."

THE CLOUD THEN DISAPPEARED LEAVING JESUS ALONE WITH THE THREE DISCIPLES. SO WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

ONE IMPORTANT THING TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT THIS STORY IS THAT THE TRANSFIGURATION SHOWED JESUS' DIVINE IDENTITY.

HIS NATURAL BODY WAS BRIEFLY TRANSFORMED TO REVEAL HIS DIVINE PERSON THAT WAS PRESENT, BUT HIDDEN.

AND, GOD'S DECLARATION ABOUT JESUS BEING HIS SON, POINTED TO THE FACT THAT WHILE MOSES AND ELIJAH EACH DELIVERED GOD'S WORD IN POWERFUL WAYS WORTHY OF OUR ATTENTION, JESUS' WORDS ARE MORE IMPORTANT.

THE MESSAGE THE DISCIPLES WERE GIVEN WAS THAT THEY MUST LISTEN TO JESUS OVER AND ABOVE MOSES AND ELIJAH.

THIS MEANS THEY WERE TOLD TO ACCEPT CHRIST'S SUPREMACY OVER THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW AND THE PROPHETS.

GOD WAS DIRECTING THE DISCIPLES, AND THROUGH THEM DIRECTING EVERYONE ELSE, TO PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE WORDS OF HIS SON, JESUS.

TRULY, JESUS HAS GREATER AUTHORITY THAN ANY OF GOD'S MESSENGERS.

HE EMBODIED GOD'S WORD AND WILL BY LIVING PERFECTLY ACCORDING TO THEM.

CHRISTIANS CAN ALSO UNDERSTAND THIS TO MEAN THAT JESUS, THE WORD OF GOD MADE FLESH, HAS GREATER AUTHORITY THAN SCRIPTURE.

THEREFORE, IF WE REALLY WISH TO FOLLOW JESUS, TO COMMIT OUR LIVES TO THE ONE WHO DIED FOR US, WE MUST LISTEN TO HIM MORE THAN ANY OTHER SOURCE.

THIS MEANS MORE THAN SIMPLY MEMORIZING HIS WORDS, IT INCLUDES SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND THEIR MESSAGE, AS WELL AS TO FOLLOW CHRIST'S INSTRUCTIONS AND EXAMPLE.

PERHAPS WE CAN LEARN FROM THE TWELVE DISCIPLES THE IMPORTANCE OF DOING THIS BY REMEMBERING HOW OFTEN THEY FAILED TO LISTEN TO JESUS.

THIS FACT EXPLAINS GOD'S COMMAND TO THE DISCIPLES TO LISTEN TO JESUS.

YOU SEE, REALLY LISTENING, INVOLVES PUTTING ASIDE OUR OWN AGENDA TO FOCUS ON WHAT WE ARE HEARING.

DURING THE TIME JESUS WALKED AMONG THEM, THE TWELVE DISCIPLES AND OTHERS HAD THEIR OWN IDEAS OF WHAT THE MESSIAH WAS GOING TO DO.

THEY WERE SO FOCUSED ON THEIR OWN HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS THEY COULD NOT LISTEN TO JESUS WHEN HE TOLD THEM THAT THE SALVATION HE WOULD BRING WAS NOT FROM ROME, BUT FROM SIN.

SOME OF THE TROUBLE WAS THEY WERE NOT IN-TUNE WITH GOD'S WILL AND SO WERE NOT ABLE TO ACTUALLY LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE OF JESUS.

THIS EXPLAINS MANY OF THEIR FAILURES, INCLUDING THEIR ABANDONMENT OF JESUS UPON HIS ARREST.

PERHAPS IF THEY HAD REALLY LISTENED BEFOREHAND, THE DISCIPLES WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SO FRIGHTENED.

AFTER ALL, BEING ATTUNED TO CERTAIN WORDS OR SOUNDS CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE.

FOR EXAMPLE, THERE IS A STORY ABOUT A NATURALIST WHO WAS WALKING WITH A FRIEND ALONGSIDE A BUSY STREET.

IN THE MIDST OF THEIR CONVERSATION, AS WELL AS THE BACKGROUND NOISE OF TRAFFIC AND OTHER PEOPLE, THE NATURALIST STOPPED AND LISTENED.

HE ASKED HIS FRIEND IF HE HEARD A CRICKET. THIS SURPRISED THE OTHER MAN.

HE RESPONDED BY ASKING “HOW COULD ANYONE POSSIBLY HEAR A CRICKET IN THE MIDST OF ALL THIS NOISE?”

THERE WAS A TREE PLANTED IN THE SIDEWALK, AND THE NATURALIST WENT OVER TO IT, LISTENING MORE CLOSELY.

HE BENT DOWN AND LIFTED UP ONE OF THE ROCKS IN THE SOIL NEAR THE TREE, TO EXPOSE A CRICKET.

WHEN QUESTIONED BY HIS FRIEND, THE NATURALIST EXPLAINED, THAT HE SPENT A LOT OF TIME IN NATURE AND HAD TRAINED HIMSELF TO LISTEN TO THE SOUNDS OF NATURE.

THIS IS NOT UNLIKE WHAT GOD WANTS JESUS’ FOLLOWERS TO DO.

WE NEED TO TRAIN OURSELVES TO LISTEN TO HIM, BECAUSE LISTENING REALLY IS IMPORTANT. IT INFLUENCES OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD.

AFTER ALL, LISTENING IS A WAY WE CAN SHOW RESPECT TO OTHERS. IT IS ALSO ONE WAY WE CAN LEARN.

THE CHALLENGE OF LISTENING IS THAT IT IS NOT SOMETHING WE ONLY HAVE TO DO ONCE OR TWICE, BUT NEVER AGAIN.

LISTENING, ESPECIALLY TO GOD, IS A CONSTANT PART OF BEING A CHRISTIAN.

OSWALD CHAMBERS, IN HIS DEVOTIONAL BOOK: “MY UPMOST FOR HIS HIGHEST”, OFFERS HIS OWN REFLECTION ON OUR NEED TO KEEP LISTENING TO THE LORD.

HE WROTE: “JUST BECAUSE I HAVE LISTENED CAREFULLY AND INTENTLY TO ONE THING FROM GOD DOES NOT MEAN THAT I WILL LISTEN TO EVERYTHING HE SAYS.

I SHOW MY LACK OF LOVE AND RESPECT FOR GOD BY THE INSENSITIVITY OF MY HEART AND MIND TOWARDS WHAT HE SAYS.

HAVE I DISOBEYED SOME COMMAND OF GOD THIS WEEK? IF I HAD REALIZED IT WAS A COMMAND FROM JESUS I WOULD NOT HAVE DELIBERATELY DISOBEYED IT.

BUT MOST OF US SHOW INCREDIBLE DISRESPECT TO GOD BECAUSE WE DON’T EVEN HEAR HIM....”

CHAMBERS ADDS THAT TO HEAR, LET ALONE LISTEN TO GOD REQUIRES US TO MAKE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO BE ATTUNED TO GOD’S PRESENCE AND MESSAGES TO US.

SOME OF THE WAYS WE CAN PAY BETTER ATTENTION TO THE LORD IS THROUGH WORSHIP, PRAYER, AND SCRIPTURE.

BEING OUT IN NATURE AND REMEMBERING GOD IS THE CREATOR OF ALL, AND THANKING GOD FOR THE BEAUTY WE SEE, CAN ALSO HELP FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON HIM.

MUSIC, ESPECIALLY HYMNS AND PRAISE SONGS CAN ALSO HELP US MAKE OUR SPIRITUAL CONNECTION WITH GOD.

AND LET US NOT FORGET THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN US, WHO CAN AND WILL HELP US, NOT JUST HEAR BUT ALSO LISTEN TO GOD.

TWO VERSES MAY BE HELPFUL TO REMEMBER AND PRACTICE: PSALM 46:10-“BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.: AND 1 SAMUEL 3:10- “SPEAK LORD, FOR YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING.”

MAY THESE VERSES INSPIRE US TO LISTEN MORE TO JESUS.

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