

## The Attention Getter Mark 9:2-9

What is the one thing that can get your attention quicker than anything? What is it that makes you stop in your tracks and listen? Maybe it's the loud "BOOM" of an explosion or the words "Special Report" on the television. Whatever change occurred, the senses of sight and sound have skyrocketed; while the rest of your body becomes frozen in time. Once the body comes back to reality, is there something different about your or life around you? What made this act stop you in your tracks? Usually, these attention getters alter a person's life even if it's as simple losing electricity for a few minutes or as grand as hearing our world declared war on ISIS. For me, the real question is, "So, how will I respond to this life changing event?" There is no right or wrong answer; just simply your answer. However, everyone does respond. Today, three of Jesus' disciples teach us a traditional (and somewhat expected) response and God teaches a non-traditional response.

In today's passage, we find Peter, James, and John suspended in time unable to speak or do anything. The story begins earlier when Jesus and the Disciples are on their journey around the Caesarea Philip territory. They have been watching Jesus preach, teach, and heal. About six days later, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to the mountain top. This was

not an uncommon act for Jesus. The mountain top was a place he could renew and restore his soul. It was often Jesus' place for quiet refuge, but today he chose to share it with three of his disciples. Finally, we get a glimpse of what happens when Jesus goes off to pray. I'm sure the hike up the mountain was filled with conversation of the miracles and teachings the Disciples have already experience. From my experience hiking, conversation helps take my focus off the climb and makes the time go faster. For the three Disciples, this was their time alone with Jesus to ask questions and share their thoughts. I wonder, were these three men doing all the talking or did they listen as well?

Listening is not an art that most humans have truly perfected. It is easier to interject thoughts and ideas rather than listen, reflect, and then respond. My listening skills were honed by my time as a Monk at Assumption Abbey in Ozark, Missouri. We were only to speak if it improved the silence with great wisdom or insight from God. The most difficult part of the silence was clearing my mind to make room for God's voice. My prayers were filled with what I thought God wanted to hear. Finally, about four days into my 7 day trip, I heard God's voice. I had been under great pressure as I was applying for Elders Ordination, finishing school, family issues, etc. I had just finished the 6:00A.M. worship and was

sitting outside watching the fog lift off the Ozark Mountains when I heard God say, “Quit worry, Quit worry, Quit worry.” Once I finally heard God’s voice with my heart, the words turned into the sound of the Whippoorwill. It was in the silence and intentional listening that I heard God speak to me. Jesus didn’t have days on the mountain top for the Disciples to clear their minds. Therefore, Jesus used an attention getter to jump start the Disciples listening to God.

The attention getter was Jesus transformed by a bright light and the presence of Moses and Elijah. The Disciples were suddenly stopped in their tracks. They had never seen such a bright light nor had they seen Moses and Elijah. The bright light alone had been an attention getter, but seeing Moses and Elijah was an added bonus. The Disciples soaked up every detail of the scene. When the light disappeared and Jesus returned them back to normal, the immediate response was to build altars, like Abraham, to honor Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. However, God wanted them to step away from tradition and do more than build an altar. God spoke directly to these men claiming Jesus as God’s Son and then God made the loudest exclamatory remark, “LISTEN TO HIM!” God was calling the Disciples to open their ears and eyes so they could be transformed by Jesus’ words and actions. How well do you really listen to God’s voice?

Transfiguration Sunday is more than simply reminding ourselves that Jesus revealed his fully Divine self to a few of his Disciples. This act was, and still is, our attention getter that Jesus didn't act in typical fashion. God needs us to not just read the scriptures or hear a clergy interpretation. God needs us to listen to Jesus and follow in Jesus' footsteps with our own actions and teachings. My fear is that the church thinks it knows Jesus but it has forgotten to listen and respond as Jesus. We get comfortable inside the walls of the church and forget God is calling us to go outside the church walls to make Disciples for the transformation of the world. I believe this transfiguration of Jesus was the attention getter to transform these Disciples.

Earlier in the passage, Jesus asks, "Who do you say that I am?" and Peter says, "You are the Messiah." They know with their heads that Jesus was the Messiah, but struggled to put their faith and trust in Jesus to be transformed themselves. God wants them to listen to everything Jesus has to teach and then start putting it into practice once Jesus has been raised from the dead. What they will find as they listen is that Jesus doesn't do things in a typical and traditional fashion. Jesus actually becomes a rebel that stays loyal to God, as well as, Jewish beliefs and customs, but also challenges traditional methods.

Time was running out for the Disciples to listen and learn. Jesus was headed to Jerusalem to live out his final days. There was much to learn and little time to teach. As Jesus and the Disciples began their descent from the mountain, Jesus said they were to remain silent until after he had risen from the dead. Even though the Disciples were confused, their ears were well tuned to Jesus. Jesus' words and actions took on new meaning that others didn't understand but followed anyway. Their focus was on learning, listening, and asking Jesus for explanations. Their lives had been transformed into searching for a deeper understanding of Jesus' power and authority. But this transformation took concentrated time of listening and allowing God's words to soak deep into their souls.

In our world today, we struggle to remain silent long enough to clear our minds of the grocery list and truly hear God's words. I believe this is the reason we celebrate Transfiguration Sunday the week before we begin Lent. I believe the intent of this celebration is to get our attention, freeze us in time, to listen to God for the next forty days. The tradition for Lent is to either give something up or take something on during the next five weeks to prepare our souls for life after Easter. This means the task you give up or take on is replaced with time listening to God. This year's Lenten journey's attention getter is thinking of Jesus as a rebel. For years, we

have taught (and been taught) that Jesus is a wonderful person who loves us! While this is true, there is another side to Jesus we are going to explore.

This Lenten season I want us to stay on the mountain top with Jesus and listen for God's voice. During worship, the focus will be on listening to how Jesus was more than the loving man we see in the pictures of our church surrounded by children. I believe this reflection is vital because Jesus didn't live only on the mountain top. Our mountaintop of learning and listening is found in worship but that isn't where we are to remain; there is more for us to do. Therefore, I believe it is time we stop talking and start listening to God. During the next five weeks, you may be shocked, frustrated, or comforted by the wisdom we hear from our Biblical leaders. Hang in there with me until Christ has risen from the dead. Listen with open ears to God's voice. Let the journey of God's transformation begins. Amen.