



Sermon
Rev. Dr. Lang Yang

"Listen to Him"

The Transfiguration of Our Lord
Our Savior Lutheran Church, Lansing, MI
2-19-2023

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Matthew 17:5, "While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (NIV). This is the Word of God. (Cros-Reference – Isaiah 42:1, Matthew 3:17; 12:18, Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22; 9:34, John 12:28, 2 Peter 1:17)

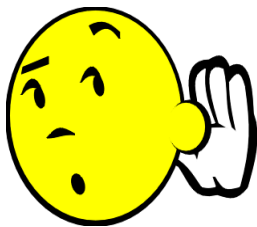
Illustration "Listen" (Show image of Hmong during the Vietnam war)



Before the Vietnam War ended, the local clan leader and others were announcing to the people that they needed to get out of Laos if the people didn't want to be ruled by the communist. Talking to some of the former military leaders, who had an essential role in helping the Hmong and the Americans during the Vietnam War, most of them said, "To be neutral that the people will no longer have to suffer by the war, we must cease from fighting this war. To save as many, we must move on with our lives in a different country. Listen, if you don't want to be ruled by communists, you must leave your home,

your land, and your country. If you don't leave, you will be persecuted." The message was to "listen and leave." If you don't want to leave now, you will not be able to go later when the communist takes over the country. Many of the Hmong who listen leave their homeland. They did not want to be ruled by the communist. They left Laos and became a refugee in another country. Those that did not want to leave were left behind with limited freedom.

I. When people have an important message, they tell us to listen. (Show Listen)



When a teacher instructs the student on how to do a math problem, it's important that the student listen, so he knows how to use the proper step to solve the problem. While driving down the road, you must pay attention if you hear a siren wailing in the distance. An emergency vehicle is approaching, and you should slow down and pull to the side so the emergency service vehicle may reach its destination promptly to save a person's life. The mother tells her young daughter to be careful when she shows her how to cut vegetables with a knife. She wants her to be cautious, so she

would not get hurt. We need to listen when someone has an important word to say.

In today's Gospel Lesson, the voice of God from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5). How well do we listen? Do we listen to God any better than others around us? One of humankind's biggest problems is poor communication. Part of poor communication is that we don't listen. It happens in all walks of life: Politics, between husbands and wives, and even in the church. It also occurs in our relationship with God. We're so busy with other things that we don't take the time to listen to what God is trying to tell us. Sometimes we don't listen to God because we don't want to hear what he says. We miss important messages because we tune him out like everything else. We start to look for other things. (Show Planes, Trains, and Automobile)



In the movie Planes, Trains, and Automobile, Steve Martin (Neal) and John Candy (Del) star. Del made the wrong turn going opposite the road while Neal was asleep. As Del drove along, he saw a couple yelling at him, "You're going the wrong way." Del thinks that they are drunk. When Neal woke up and asked what they were saying, Del was convinced that they were drunk and unwilling to listen to what they were saying. Instead of listening, they came face to face with the two semi-truck that could cause severe damage. Let's watch it happen.

(Show video clips of "You're going the wrong way")



Wrong Way - Movie Clip from Planes, Tra

Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, we often drive on the road, and people honk or tell us that something is on the road. We tend not to turn on our ears and listen to what they are trying to say to us. We are sometimes even angry at them. We need to listen to our surroundings to avoid being like Neal and Del.

- II. God says, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5). Listen to him because he has an important message. Listen, because he proclaims my Word. Listen, because he is the Word-made-flesh, my promise of mercy and forgiveness in human form. Listen, because he will set you on the right course in life. Listen, His words will strengthen you when you are tempted and comfort you in tragedy. Listen, His words will guide, direct, uplift, and sustain you.

When we look at Peter's statement, "...Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." (Matthew 17:4). Peter represents many of us. He spoke before he even thought about what he was saying. (Show Jesus transfiguration)



He wants to build a shrine or some memorial. To him, this was the most remarkable sight in the world. Three great teachers of the faith are all in the same place simultaneously. I can understand his excitement. It would be similar to having Jesus, Martin Luther, Billy Graham, or any other great teacher in the same classroom. But God is declaring the uniqueness of Jesus Christ when he says: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." (Matthew 17:5). Peter's error was not that he spoke quickly without thinking. He had placed Jesus on an equal footing with Moses and Elijah. It is essential to look at what God did NOT say on the

mountain that day: God did not say that Jesus was one among the many. God did not say that Jesus was one of the many saviors available to us. God did not say that Jesus was one of the best examples of faith. God did not say, "listen to them." Of all occasions, he could have done this. He could have pointed to Moses, Elijah, and Jesus and said all these teachers are great and important. But he did not say, "listen to them." He spoke loud and clear, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." He pointed out the one saving voice. He declares the one uniqueness of Jesus' message. (Show when God speaks)



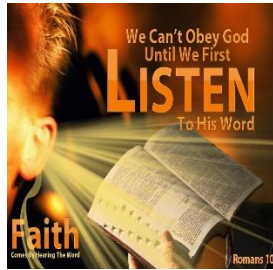
Listen!" God tells Peter, James, and John, "and keep listening." That instruction has been given to all of Jesus' disciples throughout the ages. The same teaching is given to us today. If we are to know or do or say anything at all as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, we begin by listening and keep on listening to the Word he embodies. That is why all of us, regardless of what vocation we pursue in service to God in the world, is to show up regularly for worship and listen to the essential Word of God's acceptance of us and all the world in his Son Jesus Christ.

- III. One of the worst tragedies of the 20th century was the sinking of the Titanic. The Titanic was on its maiden voyage from South Hampton, England, to New York City on the night of April 14th, 1912.

(Show sinking Titanic)



The great ship struck an iceberg shortly before midnight, and less than three hours later, it slipped beneath the icy waters of the North Atlantic. Over 1500 people died. What was so tragic about this disaster was that it could have been prevented. The Titanic received several warnings about icebergs, but the crew ignored them. Instead of changing course and going farther South, the Titanic forged ahead at full speed instead of slowing down. Suddenly, when a giant iceberg loomed in front of the ship, it was too late. The crew was warned, but they didn't listen. (Show Listen to his Word)

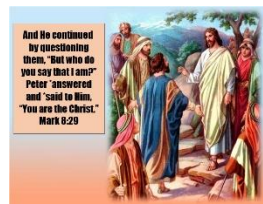


So don't walk the midway of life alone seeking answers and being bondage to this earthly possession. So don't walk the midway of life alone seeking answers and being bondage to sin. We can't obey God until we first listen to Him. When one clear, loving voice sent from God tells us to Listen to His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. You're the hand he wants to hold. Listen to Him! The essential words Jesus spoke were the ones that revealed his identity. Our heavenly Father says, "Listen to him because He is my Son who has come to suffer and die for the world's sins." Jesus often spoke of who he was and what he came to do. (Show women at the well)



When the Samaritan woman at the well said, "I know that the Messiah is coming." (John 4:25-26). Jesus answered, "I who speak to you am he." When Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you think I am?" Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of God." (Matthew 16:13-17).

(Show Peter's confession)



And Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon because this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven." When Thomas told him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus replied, "*I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except by me.*" (John 14:6). Our heavenly Father said, "Listen to him because he has the words of eternal life.

Transfiguration is the knowledge that Jesus is God, but it is more; it is also a picture

of heaven itself. The picture is the glowing Jesus standing above and in the middle of His family. On one side of Jesus are Moses and Elijah's saints of the Old Testament era. On the other side of Jesus are the saints of the New Testament era, Peter, James, and John. (Show Listen)



When Franklin Roosevelt was elected President of the United States, he proposed a "New Deal" to get the country out of the great depression. The leader of the most powerful nation tells us who he is and what he will do. We listen. The most powerful man to ever walk the earth did the same thing. He is our Lord and Savior. Jesus came to tell us who he is and what he came to do. Then he did it, healing, forgiving, dying on the cross, rising from the dead, and proclaiming God's kingdom.

Jesus said, "...whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16). That's why our heavenly Father says, "Listen to him! As you go through life, the Holy Spirit will help you that you will be able to resist the temptation of the world because you are living a holy life through Christ Jesus, because you "Listen to him!" Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which passed all understanding, keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Amen.