

Transfiguration of Our Lord

Listen to the Sound of Mercy

Luke 9:28-36 (37-43a)

Transfiguration of Our Lord

Analysis by Timothy Hoyer

28Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. 29And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. 30Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. 31They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32Now 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. 33Just 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.

34While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. 35Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" 36When 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.

37On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. 38Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. 39Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. 40I begged your disciples to cast it out,

but they could not."

41Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." 42While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. 43And all were astounded at the greatness of God.



Jesus has risen from death to give you life and mercy. In him, you are meaningful to God. Listen to him.

DIAGNOSIS: No One Listened

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): I Wasn't Listening

Grounding: Jesus listened to Moses and Elijah, who talked to him about his departure. It was as if Moses and Elijah were conveying a message to Jesus from God the Father. The message was that Jesus' departure was what God wanted, was what God approved, and was what God had sent Jesus to do. Jesus was to depart by the way of a cross and resurrection so that God could grant us forgiveness and eternal life. Moses and Elijah had brought a message of encouragement and love. Peter, James, and John did not listen to Moses and Elijah. They were too distracted by the glory and presence of such great people.

Tracking: We are distracted by all our efforts to maintain our lives. We are distracted by the news of volcanoes erupting, storms brewing, and floodwaters rising. We are distracted by our neighbor's grief over the death of their child. We have our ways to deal with life, our ways to make sense out of what happens and what we do. We do not want to depart from the habits that make our lives feel right.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Shhh! I'm Listening to Someone Else

Grounding: The three disciples became terrified when a cloud overshadowed them. Then a voice came from the cloud urging them to listen to Jesus. Yet the next day when they or other disciples tried to cast out a demon, the demon refused to listen

to them. Was it that the disciples had not listened to that voice from the cloud? Did they depend on their own resources to make sense of the situation?

Tracking: When we face evil, or perhaps we just call such situations bad or terrible, we rely on what we were taught, or fall back on whatever helps us to deal with bad events. We have our practical advice. We have our ideas of what is right and wrong, our ideas of what we can afford to do, or we look back on what we did the last time. Those are the voices we listen to. All the urging to listen to Jesus will be ignored. Jesus is just not worth listening to. He does not have the importance that our ideas have. He's not practical, and we have no experience doing what he suggests.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): I Don't Want to Listen to Bad News

Grounding: The disciples were terrified by the cloud—for them, it was the presence of God. The disciples, by not listening to Jesus, had no way to stop the demon from harming the boy. They were left facing God and the demon and death on their own. Their fears and inabilities demonstrated that the methods they used to make sense of the world did not work. They would depart this life and would have no way to stop death or make sense of evil.

Tracking: We have few direct experiences that tell us God is terrifying. We make sense of death by saying it is part of our experience of life. It's just there, a neutral event. And we make sense of our lives by evaluating them, as in, "I lived a good life." "He was a good provider." "She loved her family." But this kind of evaluation will inevitably backfire if we take a close look at what we have done. Evaluation is our demon, and we cannot cast it out.



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PROGNOSIS: Listen to Him!

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Jesus Speaks through His Resurrection

Grounding: After descending the mountain, Jesus goes on to his departure. He departs life by his death on a cross. But then he departs from death by rising to a whole new life in a new creation! When Jesus cast out the demon after the transfiguration it signaled to everyone present that Jesus was giving them a new life, so they should listen to him. Later, when he was raised from the dead, Jesus again spoke and said, "Peace be with you." That is what we get to listen to.

Crossing: When we are told about the transfiguration of Jesus,

we hear God urging us to listen to Jesus, not to evil, not to evaluation, and not to our personal ways of making sense out of our experience. As we listen to others tell us that Jesus rose from the dead for us to give us a new life, we are offered meaning, welcome, importance, and freedom from evaluation.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Jesus' Promises Are Worth Listening To

Grounding: We are urged to listen to Jesus because by his death and rising he makes us promises—the promise of new life, the promise of peace, the promise of forgiveness, the promise of living using his grace to make sense out of what we do.

Crossing: The death and rising of Jesus get our attention, even more so than a cloud suddenly overshadowing us. When Jesus gets our attention, he promises us new life, peace, and forgiveness. His promises explain who we are and what we do. Instead of trusting our own explanations for life, we trust Jesus as the way to live and care for others.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): As We Hear Jesus' Mercy, We Speak and Live Jesus' Mercy

Grounding: The disciples did not do so well listening to Jesus regarding the boy possessed by a demon. But they did listen to Jesus risen from the dead. They then lived by his way of mercy. They lived in ways that got them to listen to the stories and promises of Jesus.

Crossing: Wherever we are, we only have to look around to see how the way of Jesus' mercy and forgiveness are not listened to. We hear people blame others to explain how politics work. We hear people say that right and wrong explain how we are to act. In this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are told to listen to science. People will listen to what they want to listen to. The

demons of hate, inequality, infection, and the tensions of being evaluated will not get cast out. But Jesus has risen from death to give you life and mercy. In him, you are meaningful to God. Listen to him. He does have good, practical advice on how to live employing his mercy and forgiveness.