

# Sermon for Sunday, March 3, 2019 - “Listen! Listen Continually”

Transfiguration of Our Lord - Last Sunday after Epiphany  
Sunday, March 3, 2019  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Decorah, Iowa  
Seminarian Amalia Vagts, Preacher

Luke 9:28-43

I will get to the the demons, but first ... talk about a mountaintop experience! Sounds amazing, right?

But sometimes I don't like hearing about other people's great experiences - like when your friends go to a party you weren't invited to and then post a bunch of great pictures on Instagram.

I would guess that even the other disciples, the ones Jesus didn't take up the mountain, might think the same thing. Maybe that's why Peter and James and John didn't say anything right away about it - because it would have been one of the most aggravating “you should have been there” stories ever.

AMAZING - Moses and Elijah were there! Epic! Jesus' face like TOTALLY changed and his clothes became completely white. SRSLY: God actually spoke to us. We almost had a camp-out with those guys!

And we're like, “**Oh, that's awesome, super happy for you**”, but inside we're really sad we weren't there. Deep down, we do care because it sounds amazing. Something incredible happened. But we weren't up on the mountain having a mystical experience with Jesus. We're the ones standing around on the ground, wrestling with demons.

By demons, I mean loneliness, a fight in our family, a lost job, church denominations that chose human fear over God's love, illness, or a terrible thing someone wrote about us in Snapchat. We have to deal with all of this.

We're not on the mountain. We didn't see God. So what does any of this have to do with us at all?

Peter and James and John were weighed down with sleep, but stayed awake. This makes me think of those late night conversations around a campfire when you are getting so groggy and you are barely tracking the conversation, fighting to stay awake.

In his own language Luke uses a word that appears nowhere else in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> It doesn't mean fighting to stay awake. It means fully awake - fully, completely, thoroughly awake, fully present.

God does change me. And when I'm fully awake and fully present, I see this. This happens even when I'm not on the mountain.

It happens in relationship with others - like at the Bible reflection time I've been leading at Arlin Falck Assisted Living this year. We read and studied and prayed over this text together. And, through the radio we are worshipping together this morning.

It happens with a note - like the one Good Shepherd kids wrote in Sunday School to one of our older members: "Dear whoever you are, whatever you are going through, God loves you", said the note. And she LOVED that. "That is exactly what a kid would write!", she said.

It happens here - I'm thinking of the fact that we've added herbal tea to our Sunday morning banquet to make people feel welcome. I'm thinking of you guys - Sunday School & Youth Forum - and the fact that you have your own tables in the Fellowship Hall. I'm thinking of anyone who is here for the first time, maybe in a church for the first time ever, and who hears you are invited to join in bread and wine we share at the communion table.

You don't have to be on the mountain. We all have the chance every day to be astounded at the greatness of God. God changes us in Christ Jesus and through the Spirit of God. God says, "This is my Chosen - listen." This is a command. Listen. This is not a one-time command - it's ongoing, keep listening.<sup>2</sup> The meaning of this word in its original language is a forever command: "Listen everyone, listen continuously - keep listening!"

The pastor and author Frederick Buechner writes beautifully about what we can hear when we keep listening. We might think that person on the street is talking to us about the weather. But if we wake up, if we listen, they are saying: I'm lonely; or I want to connect with you; or I forgive you.<sup>3</sup>

Be fully awake. Listen continuously - to your own heart, to those around you, to the earth. God is speaking. God changes you - gives you life, wholeness, freedom.

Scripture tells us that Christ Jesus is the Word of God - that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God (John 1:1) and the Word became flesh and lived among us (John 1:14a).

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<sup>1</sup> *Diagrēgorēsantes*.

<sup>2</sup> *Akouete* is a present imperative active verb in the second person plural.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Buechner, "The Hungering Dark," (70-71).

Today, God says to us: Continue listening to Christ Jesus - to this Word of God. What is this message? What is this Word of God?

No one is outside the love and grace of God (Gal 3:28, Rom 10:12, ). Nothing can separate you from the love of God (Rom 8:38-39). Love God with your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love others. Love yourself (Luke 10:27).

God came into this world in the person of Jesus to become one of us; divine, speaking to us and changing us; human, wrestling with the demons of daily life. Human enough to have questions, doubts, fears. Human enough to want to have a dinner with his friends and be remembered by them. Human enough to be betrayed by friends. Human enough to face the only thing in life that every single one of us will face.

Christ Jesus lives in this world now on the mountains, on the plain and all places in between - fully divine, fully human saying over and over and over again, God changes you. Be fully awake and in the face of another you will see God.

God says - Listen to my Chosen One. Listen! Listen Continuously!

God's Chosen One, Jesus, says this to you:

You are enough.

You are beloved.

You are free.