

**Listen to Him**  
**A Sermon for Sardis Baptist Church**  
**Bob Stillerman**  
**Transfiguration Sunday, 2/9/2018**  
**Mark 9:2-9**

Do you remember the *Where's Waldo?* puzzles? They were great! There would be a huge scene – lots of people, doing lots of things; all sorts of colors, and shapes, and sizes. As a matter of fact, there was so much going on in these scenes, it made it really hard to find Waldo and his famous red and white stripes.

I don't want to reduce today's passage to a childhood puzzle. But to me, the key verse/action in the lection is hidden among so many competing images.

Imagine you were John or James or Peter. You are already talking to Jesus, who is a very interesting conversation partner. And you are hiking up a mountain – a steep, rugged, beautiful mountain. There would have been so many things to look at: a view of the Sea of Galilee; towering cedars; surely there were majestic birds nearby, or squirrels (or at least their Palestinian equivalent); and flowers and fauna; and interesting rocks; and a breeze; and the smell of the outdoors; and the sounds of the outdoors, too.

So it's a pretty compelling scene from the get-go. And then, Jesus is transfigured; he's "Tided" just like that guy in the Super Bowl Commercials. He's an astonishing white. And the text doesn't tell us, but I wonder if there's was a calm, like just before the storm, and then, "Wow, what happened to Jesus?"

And the next thing we know, there's Elijah, THE prophet of Israel, and there's Moses, THE figure in Judaism, both of whom have been dead for millennia, and yet are standing there clear as day. And they are having a conversation with Jesus like it's no big deal. Let's put that in context. Imagine you went on a hike to Crowder's Mountain, and all of a sudden Abraham Lincoln, and Albert Einstein, and Martin Luther King, and Mother Teresa appeared as if was NBD. Or for you Star Wars fans, this is like when Luke looks up and sees Obi One and Anakin and Yoda shootin' the breeze. Moses, Elijah, and Jesus make quite a triumvirate, and a distracting one at that.

And then a cloud appears, and God starts talking.

I've probably read the first seven verses of this passage three dozen times in the last few years. And if I am really honest with you, every time Transfiguration Sunday comes around, I wonder how many different ways I can tell you about this really, really strange occurrence.

"I don't know man, yeah it's weird, but hey, God's complex, and sometimes we just have to admire the complexity."

"Oh but don't you see? Elijah and Moses had mysterious deaths, and they were such pivotal figures. This says something about the nature and character of Jesus. And it frames Jesus as the next pivotal phase in God's unfolding drama."

"This supernatural story will help the disciples begin to process the life of Jesus after his death and resurrection. It'll be part of their witness."

And the truth is, I have told you all of this before.

But in all of my pontificating, some of it useful, some of it probably not, I feel like I have been distracted by all that “stuff” in the story. And in paying attention to all that stuff, I never listened to what God said. Don’t get me wrong. I knew God spoke. I just didn’t pay attention to what God said.

On Baptism of the Lord Sunday, God’s voice called out, “You are my Son, the Beloved. With you I am well pleased.” God was speaking to Jesus, offering him an affirmation of God’s calling.

On Transfiguration Sunday, God’s voice calls out: “This is my Son, the Beloved, listen to him.” God’s not talking to Jesus. God’s talking to Peter, and John, and James, and to you and me as well.

Think about that. Peter, and John, and James, and you and me, too, stand in the most mind-blowing of circumstances, in the midst of humanity’s greatest leader and prophet, in the cloud of God’s presence, on the peak of a breathtaking mountain...and NONE of these things are the headline.

A Nazorean peasant stands before us, dazzling in his Tide-white robe, and God’s says, “Listen to him.”

In other words, in Jesus, we find God among us: Here is one who heals with touch; who loves with words and deeds; who transforms lives with meaningful conversations; who humbles himself in service; who sees into the souls of people, not just the pretty and popular ones; who does not abolish the law, but fulfills it; who prophesies a truth drenched in justice and love; who helps communities realize that their commune is rooted in the divine.

Yes, Jesus may dazzle. He may rise. He may ascend. He may walk on water. He may do three dozen things you’ll never be able to fully explain or understand. But that’s not really what’s important. Here’s what is: This morning, God tells us Jesus is a source worth listening to.

And on this Transfiguration Sunday, I’m glad the disciples were able to “find Waldo.” They looked past the distractions on that mountain, eventually at least, and they listened to the One who led them. And it’s because of that listening, that we’ll share a table in a few moments – a table that transforms the world.

Jesus said, “This do in remembrance of me.” And so they did. And so do we.

Friends, we live in a busy and distracting world. In Jesus, we find a presence that breaks through all of that clutter. And in Jesus, we’re invited to a table that offers rest and welcome. This table may not levitate, and it may not transfigure, and it may even have a leg that wobbles, but I can promise you that it offers you communion with a source who transforms. And I can promise you that it offers the presence of One worth listening to.

God said, “This is my Son, that’s right he’s mine. And I love him. And I’m proud of him. He’s my Beloved. Listen to him!”

There’s no time like the present.

Amen.