

February 27, 2022

Texts: Exodus 34: 29-35; Luke 9:28-36

Title: "Listen!"

Where are you most likely to get important news and information that you rely on each day? From an old-fashioned print newspaper? On your phone? From social media? From a cable news network? What about from someone standing in the middle of your neighborhood and shouting out the latest headlines? Not likely. But if you'd lived 1,000 years ago in England, that's how you would've received latest news, from a town crier.

Since few people knew how to read in those days, and there was no simple way to spread news among towns, as time went on, town criers became the source for official news throughout England.

The town criers' proclamations almost always followed the same pattern. The crier would choose a central place in town where he would be highly visible, such as the town square or a local inn. Next, he captured everyone's attention by calling out "Oyez, Oyez, Oyez," which means, "Listen, Listen, Listen!" Then he read what was usually a proclamation from the king. Afterwards, he would nail it to the doorpost of the inn.

A few towns in England that still have a town crier. Carole Williams, who has served as the official town crier for the small town of Bishop's Stortford in England, "...you have to get your message across in a flowing, rhythmic way. If your audience is asleep before you've got to the end of the first sentence, then you've lost."

In that is my connection to today's Bible reading. **Because sometimes God has to wake us up before we can experience His power.** I think that's true for most of us. We need something important to break the cycle of busyness in our lives and our self-centeredness. That's why Jesus spent regular time on his own in prayer. That's why he took Peter, John and James with him up a nearby mountain to pray. And also, the disciples needed to be "awakened" to who Jesus really was. They needed to see just a glimpse of his majesty so that when following him became difficult, they'd remember this moment of awakening and it would give them hope and courage.

Have you ever had an awakening experience? ...a time when God broke through your everyday life and became real to you? Was it a conversation with a friend? A verse from the Bible? A sleepless night? A painful disruption in your life? A moment of pure joy? Or maybe you're still waiting for that experience. Maybe you still aren't sure that you've ever experienced God in a real and powerful way. That's okay. But I hope you do have an experience in which God speaks to you or strengthens you or becomes real to you in such a way that it changes your life.

A second thing we learn from this passage is that prayer prepares us to experience God. Prayer opens our mind to God. Jesus took Peter, John and James with him up to a mountain to pray. That was the stated reason. Jesus often went away, often up in the mountains, to pray and spend time with God. As he was praying, Peter, John and James got sleepy. Now, I wonder, how many

opportunities have I missed to hear God's voice, or to do the good works that He's set in front of me because I was too lazy to pray? How about you?

A woman named Barb tells about an incident that happened in her granddaughter's kindergarten class. A boy in the class just wasn't listening to his teacher. The teacher got fed up and said, "Since you don't want to listen, you go sit at that table by yourself." A few minutes passed, and Barb's granddaughter raised her hand and said, "I don't want to listen either. Can I sit with him?"

The truth hurts. We don't want to listen either, do we? Listening to God isn't like listening to a friend or a colleague. It's really an act of submission. When we listen to God, we are laying aside our own agenda and priorities and needs and opening ourselves to the mind and the mission that God has charted out for us.

"The word translated 'obey' in the Old Testament means 'to hear.' In the New Testament several words describe obedience. One word means 'to hear or to listen in a state of submission.' Another word simply translates obey as 'to trust.' An obedient response to God is a response of trust or faith. To really hear God's Word is to obey God's Word.

It's easy to get stressed out or turned off by the subject of praying. We think there are special words that must be said. Would it change our practice of prayer if we thought of it as simply listening to God with an open heart and mind?

A well-known author, "Dr so and so," who had written many books on prayer was giving a seminar. During the question-and-answer period, a man raised his hand and asked, "Doctor, how should I pray?" The noted expert on the subject

answered, “It’s very simple. Just tell God that you need him. And then, listen for his voice.” Is that the kind of prayer you could feel comfortable praying? More importantly, is that the kind of prayer God will listen to? You bet it is! So, what do you have to lose?

Finally, we learn from today’s passage that we call “the transfiguration,” when you experience God, you’re called to share that experience with others.

On that mountain, Peter, John and James saw God’s plan for humanity come together. Moses, Elijah, and now through Jesus, God had come in human form to share His truth and salvation with all.

And just to seal the deal, that message from heaven; “This is my Son, my chosen; listen to him!” That’s important. What did we just learn about the words used for “listening” in the Bible? They imply obedience. Once you hear, you go and do.

Now, in Matthew’s version, it’s mentioned that Jesus tells them to keep this experience a secret until after Jesus has been raised from the dead. Well, guess what? He’s been raised from the dead. It’s “after” time! Which means it’s time to share the truth of who Jesus is with everyone we can. When you have an experience of God, it’s a God given opportunity and responsibility to share it so that others might ultimately know and experience what you have experienced so they can see the view from the mountain too! Amen.