



*Listen To Him*

*A Sermon On Mark 9:2-9*

Sunday, February 11th, 2018 ♦ Transfiguration of the Lord

First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois

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After a long vacation there is a suitcase worth of stuff that needs to be put away. Sometimes there is so much it can take days to unpack it all. The same is true for Mark 9:2-9. There is so much going on in it would take us days or longer to go through it all. So instead of trying to unpack the whole passage this morning, our focus will be on the second part of verse seven, “This is my Son, the Beloved, listen to him!”

It was a beautiful sunny midsummer morning. Rose, my family dog, had been let out to play in the yard. She was a friendly dog and all the neighbors knew her. Most of the time she was a good dog, but when Mr. Mills was outside working in the garden, Rose would wander over to greet him and sit at his side. Mr. Mills happened to in his backyard that morning and Rose stopped by to say hello. After a while, a slider door opened and a voice came out calling, “Rose.” It was time to come back inside, but Rose wasn’t interested in going home. She was having a fine time watching by Mr. Mills root around in the garden. Again, there was a another holler, but this time is was a bit more stern, “Rose, come.” Rose didn’t budge. So Kari slipped on her shoes and went looking for her. Kari quickly found her and said “Rose come.” Rose still didn’t move. Then Mr. Mills said “Rose, to go home.” Guess what she did? She got up and walked right through the backyard and to the sliding door. Rose willing listened to Mr. Mills but she didn’t pay attention to Kari.

People do the same thing as Rose did. We pick and choose who we are going to listen to. Picking and choosing is out of necessity because there are so many voices competing for our attention, we can’t possibly listen to them all. In addition to that, all those voices have an idea about how we should live and if we listen to them, as they suggest, life will be good. In the book Rich Dad Poor Dad, Robert Kiyosaki and Sharon Lechter outline a model for financial success. If you listen to them, you’ll be rich in no time, or so they say. In his book Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Stephen R. Covey says there are certain practices that will make you a very successful person. If you listen to him you will quickly achieve everything you desire. Dale Carnegie, in his book How To Win Friends And Influence People offers practical advice on how to become a likeable person. If you follow what he has too say you will easily be the most popular person around. The Feed Zone CookBook tells you how to eat in order to increase your athletic performance. If you listen to its dietary plan you’ll become the athlete you always knew you were destined to be. Those are just some of the books vying for our attention. Then there are podcasts. Some episodes teach you how to be a moral person, others, how to get exactly what you want out of life, and still others, how to become a more relaxed

person. Authors and radio hosts all want our attention. Some of what those people have to say is very helpful in certain situations. Becoming financially stable is a good thing. Eating well is a good thing. Being more relaxed is a good thing. The difficulty is all those good things require you to listen to them, but we can only take notice of so much. We have limited time and energy. No matter how good or helpful those voices are we can't possibly listen to them all. So we have to pick and chose.

In Mark 9:7 God says "listen to him" the Beloved, Jesus. With all of those other helpful voices clamoring for our attention why would we listen to Jesus over them? We might answer that question by saying that we listen to Jesus because God said so, but, as every child knows, the answer "because I said so" from mom or dad isn't satisfactory. We want to know the reason, so we might respond to the question by saying "because the whole Bible tells us to listen to Jesus." Being told to do something doesn't mean we are going to do it. We are told a lot of things like only go 45 miles per hour on 150/War Memorial Drive, but if you watch the morning traffic drivers aren't going that speed. So that too isn't a fully satisfying answer either. We could answer that question by saying "we listen to Jesus because his teachings lead us to peace, hope, and love." That is true. Jesus does teach, peace, hope, and love. If we listen to him we will live generous lives. Another answer would be to say "We listen to Jesus because Jesus heals those who ask him and obey his directions." Jesus does heal all people. If we listen to him we will have a wholeness in mind and soul like we've never experienced before, even if illness and distress persist. I believe all of those answers to be absolutely true. In listening to Jesus there is peace, hope, love and healing, and, yet I still think there is a deeper and richer answer to the question "Why listen to Jesus?"

I have asked serval local pastors that question. I have asked some of my friends that question. I have asked some of you that question. In all of the answers I got there was a single common thread. One person said it this way "I listen to Jesus because I was designed to glorify God. When we listen to Jesus we are acknowledging and revealing the majesty and splendor of God to the world around us. We are living into our design." As you may have guessed the person who said that is a pastor. A friend said they listen to Jesus because "I am created to be in relationship with Jesus and that means I talk with him and I listen to him." Another person said they listen to Jesus because "I don't totally get this world and Jesus is the voice that helps me to understand life." The common thread in all those answers has to do with the reason why we exist. We exist because God created us. That is the purpose and the point of the first two chapters of the Bible. They tell us who created us and why were created. God created us. We have been created to be in relationship with God. In response to God's creativity and superabundant love for us, we listen to his Son, the Beloved, Jesus. We are designed that way, designed to listen to Jesus.

Although, listening to Jesus isn't easy because there are so many other positive voices calling for our attention. We all have the freedom to choose who we want to listen to, but the real trouble lies in the fact that, sin, brokenness in relationship with God, has jumbled everything up. Sin has disrupted our attention and steered it away from Jesus and to other things. Instead of listening to Jesus we tune out.

Anyone who has ever had a relationship with another person knows just how difficult listening can be. Listening takes intentional effort. We must set out to listen to the other person and to talk with them if we want to have a good relationship with them. The same is true with Jesus. We must make the effort to listen, setting aside time to pray and read the Bible. Through prayer and reading the Bible Jesus speaks to us and we listen.

Rose, the family dog, picked who she listened to, but things are a little different for you and I. We listen to Jesus because we are designed that way, even though, it's not easy and sin has messed things up. So an answer to the question "Why listen to Jesus" is because God has made us to be in relationship with himself and like every other relationship that means listening. So we listen to Jesus, and as we listen to Jesus peace, hope, and love flow from him to us. As we live in this world we share all what Jesus has given us: peace, hope, and love with the world. We are designed to listen to Jesus and to do so takes intention, prayer and reading the Bible.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.