

Sermon on Luke 9
Feb 10, 2013

Let's put today's reading into perspective. Peter has just confessed Jesus to be the Messiah. Jesus has given his first prediction of his death and resurrection. He then goes on to tell those following him that if they want to continue to follow him—they too will have to take up their own cross **every day** and follow him.

Now Jesus has taken Peter, James and John with him up on the mountain to pray. While praying there Jesus' appearance is changed and his clothes become dazzling white. Then two great persons of the Jewish faith, Moses and Elijah, appear to be talking to Jesus. Understandably the disciples are confused and awestruck; they don't want to leave, they want to build permanent buildings and stay in the presence of this awesome group for a long time.

But then a voice comes to them out of the fog surrounding them telling them: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" Then they are alone and back to reality; a reality where they are unable to exorcise a demon from a young boy. They have gone from the high of hearing the voice of God to the reality of life when they can't perform an exorcism.

But there is something in this story that can help us give thanks and praise for our mountaintop experiences and words for us to cry out for help with our everyday life experiences; especially when we are bearing our cross. It's prayer. Luke is the only Gospel writer to put the transfiguration event in the context of prayer. In fact prayer is a very important aspect of the gospel of Luke.

There are many aspects to prayer. One is that it helps to deepen our relationship with God. God wants to be in conversation with us and prayer is how

we enter into that conversation. Just as when we pour out our inner most feelings to family and friends—not expecting them to do anything about our problems, but just because we need someone to share our experiences with—making our relationship stronger; so it is with God. God wants us to verbalize our feelings, our hopes, our fears, our joys and we do that in prayer.

But prayer is also a way for us to listen to God and hear what God wants for our lives. As we lift up our joys and concerns, dreams and fears, hopes and anxieties to God we bridge the gap between our Sunday faith lives and our everyday work lives. It is through prayer that we who are still here on earth can become and remain Jesus' disciples; how we can listen to and follow him.

But prayer doesn't come easy to most of us; in fact I would bet that most of us here feel very uncomfortable praying out loud for ourselves or someone else. Growing up my family didn't pray out loud much. In fact the only time we did was at holiday meals and then one of my grandparents would pray because we kids were too scared to do it! I believe that fear comes because we think we need to have fancy words and proper postures before we can pray to God. Another reason, and I can only speak about growing up in a German household, is that you don't speak your prayers out loud because that would be showing off and drawing attention to yourself.

But that voice from the cloud calls us to listen to Jesus and one way to do that is through our regular conversation with God in prayer. I can tell you from personal experience that more we pray the more comfortable, confident and

competent we become at thinking about all of our lives in relation to God and our faith.

So today I want us to get a little practice in “listening to him” and praying. But before we do that there are a few things you need to know. First, there isn’t just one way to pray. God accepts and hears all forms of prayer. Secondly, prayer is being honest with God. Tell God what is really on your mind and in your heart. Thirdly, most prayers are thanking God for what is good in our lives and asking God for help with what is difficult in our lives. And finally, what is powerful about prayer aren’t the words we use, but the fact that we care enough about the other to pray for them.

So take a few moments and talk with the person seated next to you. Ask them what is on their hearts, or where they feel God is calling us, or what God might want us to do. Share your thoughts with one another and then take time to pray for them. At this time I won’t ask you to pray out loud, but offer a silent prayer to God. And then listen for the reply. Amen.