



Last Sunday of Epiphany  
Transfiguration Sunday  
Light of Christ Anglican Church  
The Rev. Mike Moffitt  
February 27, 2022

*Shut Up and Listen To Him*

Text: [Luke 9:28–36](#)

I hate it when I think my opinion should be known, only to find out that I would have been better off shutting up and listening. The old adage is that it's better to be quiet and thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt. I found out a long time ago that even though I have a size 11 foot there is enough room in my mouth for it.

Years ago I went to a three day "Ancient Wisdom-Anglican Futures Conference" at Trinity School for Ministry. I was having lunch with a group of men that I didn't know. I now realize that when you don't know who you're talking to it's best to listen instead of waxing eloquent. One of the men was talking about a topic I felt I had some knowledge of, and I thought it prudent to question something that he had said about it. He looked a bit surprised but gave me a short yet sufficient answer. He then apologized for leaving because he needed to get ready for the program in the next seminar. A few minutes later when I went to find a seat I noticed a book table offering various books written by the next speaker. Guess who the next speaker was. Guess what his area of expertise was.

I toyed with the idea of leaving or going to a local WalMart to find a mask to wear but instead I sat down and listened to a talk that revealed why he had been invited as the speaker. Afterward I bought two of his books and apologized for being the southbound part of a northbound mule. This past

week out of curiosity I looked him up again to read his bio and found out that he has 50 papers published and written 14 books. He is known around the world as an expert in his field.

I have often felt that if I had to compare myself with one of Jesus' twelve disciples that I would likely say Peter. He had a good heart but a tendency to speak when silence was called for. We just read an endearing example of this in our Gospel reading.

This morning we will be primarily considering our gospel reading from [Luke 9:28–36](#), the Transfiguration of Christ. We'll attempt to understand the implications both then and now when seen through the lens of our Old Testament reading from [Exodus 34:29–35](#).

First let's deal with one of the most common misunderstandings that appear in the scriptures. It pertains to the identity of Jesus Christ and the relationship of the unity and work of the Trinity in the history of redemption.

One of the most common questions asked by those who read the Old Testament concerns people who are said to encounter God and yet live through it.

You likely remember when Moses encountered the burning bush and his reaction. Exodus 3:2–6,

*And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. <sup>3</sup>And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." <sup>4</sup>When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup>Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are*

*standing is holy ground.”<sup>6</sup> And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.*

Why was Moses afraid to look at the burning bush once he understood who was actually speaking to him. Before Moses knew who was speaking it’s clear that he was looking at the bush. This was before the story in [Exodus 33](#) when Moses asked God to reveal His glory. God agrees to allow Moses to partially see His glory as He passes by him because, *“you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live”* (v.20).

Moses would only be allowed to partially see God’s glory but not in all His glory. The prophet Isaiah recalls a vision of the Lord seated upon His heavenly throne and writes in chapter 6:1–3,

*In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup>Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. <sup>3</sup>And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”*

Even the seraphim, the Angelic creatures who are continually before the throne of God, must cover their faces because His glorious presence is so overwhelming that they cannot bear to look upon Him.

Throughout the Old Testament, we frequently encounter the “angel of the Lord.” In both the Hebrew and Greek the word “angel” is translated “messenger”. Those verses are sometimes referring to particular angels such as Gabriel or Michael but there is an important distinction between the Heavenly messengers and the “Angel of the Lord.”

The passages referring to the “Angel of the Lord” usually identify Him to be, Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or simply God. Many commentators believe this to be the pre-incarnate, second person of the Trinity and there are many examples of this. John 1:18 makes the point,

*No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. (NASB1995).*

The Apostle Paul writes in Timothy 1:16, referring to The King of kings and Lord of Lords,

*who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.*

Throughout the Old Testament there are many examples of the Angel of the Lord appearing as a man yet revealing Himself as God. It was the Angel of the Lord who appeared to Hagar in [Genesis 16](#), Abraham in [Genesis 18–19](#), Gideon in [Judges 6:11–24](#), Manoah in [Judges 13](#), and many other examples that we don’t have time to unpack in a sermon. Suffice it to say that the angel of the Lord was not simply a created being as were the other angelic messengers. Rather, He was who He claimed to be, “*the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*”—Yahweh, yet a distinct person from another Yahweh (cf. [Genesis 19:24](#); [Zechariah 1:12](#)). In the highest probability, the identity of the angel of the Lord was the pre-incarnate Christ, God the Son. As revealed in the New Testament, He mediates and intercedes for the people of God, on their behalf—not as a mere created agent, but as Yahweh Himself, the second person of the Holy Trinity.

Now in light of this let’s turn back to our comparison between our Old Testament and Gospel passages. Let’s read Exodus 34:29–30,

*When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.*

Moses came back down the mountain where he had been with God. He had broken the first set of tablets, that had been engraved by the finger of God. ([Exodus 32:19](#)). Moses broke the tablets because Israel broke the covenant, with God by making a golden calf to worship. They had bowed down before this man-made image of God, but they didn't consider themselves worshipping a different god, just one they could see in their midst. They danced around proclaiming that this image was Elohim (in the plural form) in essence meaning the gods who had brought them out of the land of Egypt.

God told Moses that He would destroy the children of Israel for their unfaithfulness to Him. After their great sin with the golden idol ([Exodus 32](#)), Moses interceded for Israel, they repented, and God restored the relationship though 3,000 men were killed for their blasphemy and unwillingness to repent. So God called Moses back to the top of Mount Sinai but demanded that no one but Moses could even come near the mountain, not even the animals.

Moses acted as a mediator between God and the people. The people couldn't deal with God directly because of their own sin and rebellion, so Moses bridged the gap between the people and God.

Once again Moses goes back up the mountain to receive the new tablets, and this is where he asks the Lord to show him His glory. In [Exodus 34:5](#)

God descended once more in the “*cloud of glory*” also translated “*overshadow*” and often referred to as the Shekinah. This same cloud is revealed many times in the word of God.

Israel would see it as it covered Mount Sinai and as it went with them by day in the pillar of cloud.

It stood at the tent of Moses when the Lord came to meet with him. The children of Israel would stand far away and worship in front of their own tents.

This cloud-filled Solomon's temple with the glory of God so overwhelming that the priests had to leave.

It was the Shekinah that overshadowed Mary at the conception of Jesus.

It was present at the Transfiguration of Jesus in our gospel reading this morning

It will be present at the return of Christ in Revelation 1:7, *“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.”*

Listen to Exodus 34:5–8,

*The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to*

*the third and the fourth generation.” And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped.*

After this amazing scene, Moses who experienced a revelation of God’s glory, felt a closeness to his Lord that gave him the courage to intercede on behalf of the children of Israel. God grants the request and renews the covenant. Exodus 34:28 offers an important bit of information for us to consider.

*So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.*

God engraved upon the first set of the commandments but Moses in anger broke them. So he had to engrave the second set with his own hands and tools. You would think that he would be starving and dehydrated but that’s not what he recorded in the Book of Exodus.

When Moses comes back down from Mount Sinai there is tangible evidence that he has been enveloped in the glory of God and none the worse for wear. This kind of fasting is never repeated or recommended in the Scriptures, except for when Jesus, after His baptism was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted for 40 days and 40 nights. Remember that when Satan tempted Him to turn stones into bread after His fast of 40 days and nights, Jesus replied from the law of God in Deuteronomy 8:3, *“...man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”*

Charles Spurgeon wrote concerning the effect of beholding the Lord on Moses,

The radiance of Moses’ shining face was a reflected radiance, a received glory. The source was the face of God, and as

Moses communicated so directly with God his face received some of this shining glory. *“The face of Moses shone because he had long looked upon the glory of God.”*

Let’s now turn to our gospel and read [Luke 9:28–31](#),

*Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses, and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*

Luke places this story about eight days after Peter’s confession that Jesus was the anointed one of God, Jesus’ foretelling that he was going to be rejected by the religious leaders, killed, and on the third day be raised and,

*“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.... For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”*

Luke makes no comment as to why only Peter, James, and John are singled out to go with Jesus. I do think the fact that Jesus takes them with him up on the mountain to pray is instructive. Since the Garden of Eden, before the fall of man, God would descend down from His dwelling to walk with Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening.

Dr. Meredith Kline in his book *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, writes,

Dominating the landscape of Eden was the mountain of the Lord. This motif of God’s mountain is a pervasive element in biblical symbolism from creation, through redemption, to the

consummation. It is most familiar in the form of Mount Zion, which brings out clearly the nature of this mountain as the site of the temple residence of the Lord, the sanctuary of his Theophanic Glory-Presence, the place of his royal sabbatical rest as he sits enthroned amid the cherubim.

Of course we have already seen that Moses went up upon the earthly Mount Zion to meet with God. Jesus is taking the three disciples up on what is likely Mount Hermon to pray. The disciples were sleeping soundly when they are awakened by voices and as they look on they see Jesus's face and clothing both radiant as dazzling white. Somehow they recognize Moses and Elijah speaking with Jesus about departure and the upcoming events in Jerusalem. I don't know how they identified Moses and Elijah as I'm assuming they don't wear name tags in glory.

Darrell Book in his IVP Commentary on Luke suggests,

The disciples are trying to come to grips with what is happening. In their view Jesus is another great figure, like Moses and Elijah. He will find a people like Moses and sustain them through hope like Elijah. So Peter suggests they together celebrate Tabernacles, a feast that looked forward to the eschaton (also called the Feast of Ingathering). They should build three booths in honor of Jesus and his colleagues. The suggestion is eminently reasonable, except that it understates Jesus' relationship to his two witnesses. Peter wants to enjoy the moment and prolong it in celebration. He wants to stay on the mountaintop for as long as possible.

You can hardly blame Peter for wanting this scene to continue. I mean come on, it's Moses and Elijah! Luke however just points out that Peter

didn't know what he was saying (this is where I identify with him) but what happens next is so powerful. Let's read again Luke 9:34–36,

*As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.*

Once again the cloud comes down as the Lord God comes to meet with His people. For their protection He comes shrouded in a cloud for their safety but also to identify to them who is speaking. What is the Father telling them about the Son that they haven't understood yet? They believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and they believe that He is the Son of God, and they also believe that Jesus is great and wonderful just like Moses and Elijah. They are Jews who have been raised believing that the law was given to them by God - but through Moses, and Elijah was the prophetic voice that not only spoke the words of God to His people but revealed the power and authority of God through miracles, and even brought divine justice down upon the enemies of God.

They thought they knew who Jesus was and they loved Him, but what they didn't yet understand is that Moses and Elijah were not there to meet up with a colleague, they were there to honor the one who created them and poured out His power and love into them. This wasn't their co-worker this was their God.

So when the Father shows up, which likely made them fall on their faces and they grew silent. This wasn't so much a rebuke as it was telling them to listen better and seek to understand what Jesus had been telling them all

along. They needed to listen to Jesus so they will understand His uniqueness, His call and destiny to suffer. They needed to come to terms with the truth that their role was not only to contemplate Jesus but to faithfully serve him. Celebration would come in the future, but now was the time for instruction, response, and action.

To really grasp the importance of this event I find it helpful to consider [2 Peter 1:16–21](#) written many years after the transfiguration of Jesus,

*For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

The disciples didn't realize while they were up on the mountain with God that the day would soon arrive when the Jewish leaders would accuse them of betraying their Jewish heritage and violating the law of God. They would be seen as those who turned away from the law and the prophets and therefore turned away from God. The pressure was lessened by the memory that they were there the day when Moses, the very one who represented the law of God, and Elijah, the one who symbolized the

prophetic voice of the Messiah, came to honor the Son of God that they loved and served.

They had come to understand who Jesus really was and it was far, far, far greater than what they had originally believed. Once they had run away from the religious authorities who arrested Jesus and had him put to death. They had seen and been with the resurrected Lord and watched Him ascend back to the Father with instructions to go back and wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Nobody would be able to convince them that Jesus was anything but what they now knew Him to be. He wasn't just the head of their band of brothers, He was their creator, the Lord of all—worthy of praise, honor, and glory. He was worthy of their service—they would both live and die for Him. Is that how you know him?

This Wednesday, on Ash Wednesday we come to the end of the season of Epiphany and enter the Lenten season, a time of penitential preparation for Easter. It's said to be an opportune time to reflect on what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ and that is true. It's also a time to ask the Holy Spirit to provide you with a deeper understanding of who Jesus Christ really is and why He is more important than anything this world has to offer.

I want to close with a prayer from the *Valley of Vision* entitled, "Christ Is All."

Let's pray.

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