

Sermon 2008 Transfiguration

Text: Matt. 17: 1-9

Theme: "And Still She's Talking"

Everybody is different in the way they process information. Some people talk through the information and the more they talk, the more they process. It's sort of like chewing the cud for a cow. The verbal processor needs to talk about it as he thinks about it and that is how he comes to understand it.

Other people process the information by silently analyzing it. He takes whatever findings need to be considered and turns them over and over in his brain until he has the "ah-ha" experience he is hoping for and suddenly, the data clicks into place and he has understanding.

One of the beauties of the way God puts families together is that he tends to put both kinds of processors into the same family, and that causes sparks to fly – not to mention some good laughs. Noah is a silent processor. He takes in the data and considers it silently until he comes up with a plan for how to handle it. Dänya, in case some of you have not noticed, is a verbal processor. She can use a thousand words to tell you where to hang up your coat. So a couple of weeks

ago, Noah had committed some vile transgression against the rules of the house. Neither he nor I remember just what it was, but I'm sure it was heinous. He and I were sitting at the dinner table while Dänya was doing dishes and she was holding forth on the virtues of doing whatever he did wrongly right. Noah got it. He had gotten it in fact about 20 minutes previously, but that will not stop a verbal processor. Dänya was thoroughly irritated and she was processing her irritation as verbal processors do; verbally. Noah on the other hand thought that he had to process everything she was handing him and was feeling overwhelmed because he is a silent processor. As Dänya was launching into yet another diatribe, Noah looked at me and said under his breath,

“And still she’s talking.”

I tell you that because I think we saw a mini replay of that scenario on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus, Peter, James and John have gone up to the mountain for Jesus to be revealed as the Lord, the King of Glory. Suddenly, right before their eyes, Jesus becomes brightly, radiantly glowing like the sun. Not only that, but

Moses and Elijah appear beside him. God is painting a vivid picture for them. Moses is the giver of God's Torah, not just the Law but also the Gospel. Torah is everything God says and everything God does; the way in which he loves us and cares for us and stands with us through all difficulty.

Moses, prior to Christ, is the central figure for all believers because he delivered the Torah. Elijah is chief among the prophets, who led God's people back to the Torah over and over again during the infancy of the kingdom of Israel. The Torah and the Prophets were standing right there with Jesus who is the fulfiller of the Torah and the epitome of prophets. What more needs to be said?

Well, leave it to Peter to come up with inane drivel in any moment of silence. Peter was a verbal processor to be sure. In fact, I don't think Peter had any tolerance at all for silence. So he says, "Hey, let's build some shelters – one for Moses, one for Elijah and one for Jesus and we can just stay up here forever. Yeah, guys, it will be great, just hanging out with Moses and Elijah and Jesus and never having to actually gone back down to the valley and deal with any

difficulties in life. We can just avoid all of that and ..." I picture God looking at Jesus and saying, "And still he's talking."

The text says "He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.'" God interrupted Peter! He cut him right off and drew his attention to what was important. Listen to Jesus! Building tents is not why you are here! Pay attention to what I am showing you.

We often spend too much time talking and not enough time listening and then pondering. I can imagine that God often listens to our prayers and says under his breath to Jesus, "...and still they're talking." Even when I ask people how they know that they are going to heaven, I will hear from them that they pray. Praying is talking, not listening. When I was growing up, there was a woman who sat about three pews ahead of us (because you know that Lutherans always find their pews). Every Sunday she would leave during the readings to go to the bathroom but she was always firmly in her pew during the prayers, fervently praying and muttering amen under her breath. In

other words, when God spoke to her, she was taking a powder break, but when her turn came to talk, by golly she was always front and center.

Isn't that Peter? He was always front and center with the talking but not so good at the listening. Not so adept at the pondering. Isn't that us too? Don't we so often tune God out when he speaks but we always are happy to chat him up when we want something. Now this is not a sermon saying that God doesn't want us to ask him for something when we want it. God invites us to ask anywhere and anytime. Nor is this a sermon on the evils of taking a potty break during the readings or the sermon (although I do find that pretty irritating), the point of this sermon is that we get so focused on the trees that we miss the entire forest.

Peter is missing the point that the living son of the eternal God is speaking to him and he wants to build tents. He is concerned about many things but missing that which is most needful – that's the way Jesus put it to Martha when she complained that Mary wasn't helping with the household chores. What are you doing in your life right now

that is missing the point? How are you marking time without accomplishing the tasks the Lord has laid before you? What questions are you asking without bothering to listen to the answers?

The goal is to “listen to him.” Stop worrying about interpreting him, explaining him and/or disagreeing with him. Just listen to him. The power of the word of the living son of the eternal God will effect change in your life. As he was transfigured before Peter, James and John, so will you be transformed by his Word. If you like everything about yourself and your life and you believe that nothing needs to be changed or improved, leave now. Because, I’m warning you; listening to the Christ will bring change. You will be transformed as you ponder all that he has done and said. AMEN.