

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Intro

Remember when we could go to the movies – actually at a movie theatre?

I would love to get there in time to watch the **COMING ATTRACTIONS**.

Now, Coming Attractions are not all the same:

- Some give away too much of the movie – so you feel that you've already seen it, so you don't need to go;
- And others are so disjointed and are usually just a string of special effects, car chases and explosions – so you don't have any idea what the movie is about – and you don't care to find out.

But the best ones give you **just a taste**, they whet your appetite so that you want to come back and see the whole thing.

And in a way, the **TRANSFIGURATION** is a kind of Coming Attraction;

- It's a preview of the glory that Jesus and the Disciples will eventually share when the Kingdom of God comes in all its fullness.

So grab your popcorn and your Milk Duds and let's peruse this preview together – so that we might get an idea of what is still to come.

I. Transfiguration as Epiphany

A. It is traditional that on the Last Sunday of Epiphany we hear the story of the **Transfiguration**.

1. Here in this season of *manifestation* or “making known” we begin with the **ADORATION OF THE MAGI**.

2. We hear of Jesus' Baptism when he is proclaimed as God's “Beloved Son.”

3. We view the beginning of Jesus' ministry as he calls his first Disciples and teaches and heals in Capernaum and the surrounding countryside.

4. And we conclude the season with the **Transfiguration**, an event after which there can be no doubt as to who Jesus is or what he has come to do.

B. The way Mark tells the story draws on themes and symbols from Israel's past and its hopes for the future.

1. Jesus takes his closest Disciples to the top of a mountain to pray,
- and while there his garments become "dazzling white".

2. Then **Moses** and **Elijah** appear and talk with him:
- MOSES – the Supreme Law Giver of Israel – representing the tradition of the Torah; and
- ELIJAH – considered the first and greatest among the Prophets.

3. MOSES and ELIJAH then represent both the LAW and the PROPHETS – the whole of Jewish Scripture, whose promise Jesus comes to fulfill.

4. Symbolically there is also a focus on the end of time with these two: as we heard in our first reading, ELIJAH was swept up into heaven in a whirlwind – and according to the Prophet Malachi, his return would be a sign of the coming of the Day of the Lord; and MOSES has his own encounters with God on a mountain.

5. Then they are overshadowed by a CLOUD – always a symbol of the Divine presence – and once again a VOICE proclaims, "*This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!*"

C. So the **Transfiguration**, then, is God's "Stamp of Approval" on the ministry of Jesus.

1. It's a giant **YES** stamped across all that Jesus has done and all that he is going to do.

2. Here we have the two greatest figures in Judaism joining Jesus to say, "Go on. You're doing the right thing."
- And the Voice confirming that message.

3. From this point on in the Gospel, Jesus turns his sights to Jerusalem – to Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Beyond.

4. We too, make this journey with Jesus;

- we too will now travel with him to the events of Holy Week,
- only our journey is called Lent.

II. Hearing the Voice of God

A. What must it have been like to hear the Voice of God?

- To really know and have no doubts.

1. Very few of us ever have an experience like the Disciples when we hear the voice of God ringing in our ears.

2. And yet, ELIJAH did – quite often – for it was ELIJAH’S task to proclaim the Word of the Lord to a people who didn’t want to hear it.

3. ELIJAH was the great Prophet of God, who lived in the middle of the Ninth Century B.C.

4. He was God’s messenger to King Ahab and his wife the lovely Jezebel, who supported the worship of the God BAAL and other Canaanite fertility Gods.

5. But after an encounter with the Prophets of Baal – more like an episode of “WrestleMania” than Church – ELIJAH made a fool of Jezebel’s God and killed 100 of her best prophets.

6. And so ELIJAH must flee for his life – he is found miserably sitting in a cave, moaning to God, “I do all this for you and this is the thanks I get!”

7. And God calls to him, and says, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”

8. Then comes one of my favorite passages of Scripture:

- “Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind;

- And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake;
- And after the earthquake a fire, but the lord was not in the fire;
- And after the fire **a sound of sheer silence.**”
- The R.S.V. translates it **“a still small voice.”**

9. God’s voice is not always where we expect to find it.

10. It’s not always in the loud, booming, brassy sounds,

- but often in times of QUIET when we are ready to be open to it.

B. How do WE hear and respond to the voice of God?

- Do we, like ELIJAH, look for God to be loud and overwhelming?
- Do we raise our hands to the sky and say, “God, just give me a sign!”

1. The story is told of a great rain storm resulting in a flood.

2. A man was trapped in his house and eventually had to scramble to safety on his roof.

- And as he sat huddled and wet on his roof, with the flood waters rising, he prayed to God to save him.
- Soon along came a man in a row boat who offered to save him
- MAN said, “No thanks, God will save me.”
- The waters rose higher – now over the roof – along comes another man in a motor boat – He said, “Get in the boat.”
- Man said, “No thanks, God will save me.”
- Now the water is really rising – so high that the man is now treading water trying to stay afloat – along comes a helicopter – they say over a loud speaker “Hold on, we’ll drop you a line.”
- The man shouts back, “No thanks, God will save me.”
- Well, the man died and went to heaven – there he met God and said, “God, when I was trapped in that flood, why didn’t you save me?”
- **God:** “I sent you two boats and a helicopter.”

3. Do we need God to make a big production number,

- or do we wait and listen for God to speak to us in that *still small voice* – that sound of sheer silence?

C. There are ways that can assist us in hearing the voice of God.

1. First we need to be still ourselves,

- we need a regular time to be quiet

- we need to close the door – turn off the world – and listen for God.

2. Some might call it meditation, but it's prayer.

3. Sometimes when we pray, we tell God all our problems, all our needs – and we even give God the solutions.

- But as I have said before, Prayer is a lot like a telephone call – you have to stop talking and LISTEN to have a complete conversation.

4. Thomas Merton once said, *“When your mind is silent, then the forest suddenly becomes magnificently real and blazes transparently with the reality of God.”*

5. But the key is to give yourself the time and space to have those silent moments with God.

6. Another way that can help us to better hear God is to study.

7. When we study God's word, we can better recognize God's voice;

- when we study the writings of others on prayer, scripture, or spirituality, we can strengthen our own understanding and listen better for God's voice in our lives.

III. Following God's Call

A. All of these are ways to strengthen our inner-ears to hear the “still small voice” of God;

- and the church gives us a wonderful way to practice these things in the Season of **Lent**.

1. During **Lent** we have many opportunities to STOP and LISTEN for God's call to us – God's “still small voice”.

2. In addition to our Sunday morning time of worship, we have other services in which we may participate.

3. Both our service of **Celtic Prayer** and our **Taize Prayer** service give us a time to settle in and to be silent with God – you might give one or both a try – just for Lent – and see what happens.

4. On Wednesday evenings at 7:00 we can also join with our friends at Mount Cross for a service called “Holden Evening Prayer” which is near and dear to them.

5. Several of us have used the app “Pray as You Go” that you can download on your phone or computer.

– Created by a group of English Jesuits, “Pray as You Go” features a daily scripture reading and meditation on that reading with ways that we might offer our thoughts to God.

6. You might also try the Upper Room Zoom – now on Tuesdays at Noon – for 15 minutes of quiet reflection and prayer.

7. But whatever you do – remember that the idea is to use it for a time of silence to better hear God’s voice.

B. For when we truly hear God’s call, then we, like Jesus, can become **TRANSFIGURED**.

1. To be **TRANSFIGURED** means that we must answer that call and respond, no matter what it takes.

2. The **Transfiguration** was not an end for Jesus: it was a beginning – the beginning of the road to his death and resurrection;

- and so it must be for us, as well.

3. As I said before, the **Transfiguration** is a **PREVIEW**;

- Its purpose is to let the Disciples know where the Way of the Cross eventually leads.

- Jesus’ suffering and death are not an end in themselves, nor are they to be avoided.

4. We too are called to be **transfigured** by the love of God, as we listen for God’s voice.

5. While our clothes may not shine brighter than a bleach commercial – our LIVES **can shine** with God’s love.

- And God’s light and love can shine through us to enlighten others in all that WE say or do.

6. For when we take the time to really listen to God’s voice, when we genuinely act to do the things God calls us to do;

- then we truly will be **transfigured**.

- We’ve all known people like that – and we can be like that too – alive with the love of God.

7. It sounds hard, it could even be downright impossible,

- but the answer is right there in the Gospel,

- God’s own voice tells us: “This is my Son ... LISTEN to him.”

8. Listen for God’s “*Still small voice*” - God’s “sound of sheer silence”.

- That you too might be **transfigured** and be a Light to the world in that place where you are called to serve.

Let Us Pray

O God , who before the passion of your only-begotten Son revealed His glory upon the Holy Mountain: Grant to us that we beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our own cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. AMEN.

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