

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

Today we are privileged, with Peter, James, and John, to “*exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy mountain*” (Ps. 99:9) for they told us of the power and majesty of His coming (1 Pet. 1:16). Today we are privileged to add our voices to theirs: “*It is good that we are here.*” Today, our ears are privileged to hear the voice of the Majestic Glory speak to us from the cloud and point us to Jesus: “*This is My Beloved Son.*”

This year, the echo of these words may seem a bit fainter. This year we didn’t hear the story of Jesus’ baptism in which that same voice thundered down from heaven concerning the Son, as Jesus clambered up out of the Jordan River. This year we didn’t hear the Father proclaim at Jesus’ baptism: “*You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.*” That was the first time the Father said those words, as Jesus was beginning His ministry on earth. He says them again today at the climax of Jesus’ ministry, for shortly Jesus will enter into Jerusalem and there ascend another mount, Mount Calvary, there to be glorified again, glorified as the Son of Man “*is lifted up from the earth*” (John 12:32) unto death.

At Jesus’ baptism, the theophany was a manifestation of the Holy Trinity — the Father’s voice from the cloud, the Son still dripping with water, the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove. At Jesus’ transfiguration, the theophany was even more dramatic. What a sight for the disciples: Jesus was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, Matthew says, and His clothes shone intensely white. Moses and Elijah joined Jesus on the mountain and held “converse high.” And the cloud, reminiscent of the cloud that led Israel in the wilderness, that covered the holy mountain, that descended upon the tabernacle, here enveloped the mountaintop company — and the Father’s voice came from it. Luther still sees the Holy Trinity in this event, the Spirit in the cloud this time. I’m not convinced of that, but it was an event in which the disciples saw the glory “*of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14).

In His baptism, Jesus identified with us sinners and fulfilled all righteousness on our behalf. In His transfiguration, His disciples get to identify with Him in His glory as He showed them a glimpse of “*the glory that is to be revealed to us*” (Rom. 8:18) when “*the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father*” (Matt. 13:43). That’s what we just sang about, too: “Christ deigns to manifest today What glory shall be theirs above Who joy in God with perfect love” (LSB413).

This is Nevaeh’s glory today, who by baptism has “[*turned*] to the Lord, the veil removed.” She has begun to behold the glory of the Lord, for we are assured that all who have been united with Jesus in a death like His, shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His (Rom. 6:5). And, to be sure, the glory she now enjoys is not all there is. It began today in baptism as “*the Lord who is the*

*Spirit*” was given to her, but the glory to be revealed in her will come as she lives in the Gospel, being “*transformed by [it in the] renewal of [her] mind*” (Rom. 12:2). In this way she will be “*transformed into the same image [an image of Christ] from one degree of glory to another.*”

So it is for all of us, baptized into Christ Jesus, who look to Him and trust in Him and listen to Him. This glory is ours now, too, for He has chosen us in Christ Jesus, He has called us by His Spirit through water into His kingdom, and He has justified us by the blood of His Son whom He handed over to death for our trespasses and raised up for our justification. And so He has also glorified us.

And yet, this glory is not apparent to our eyes. Our glory today is not manifested externally as Jesus’ was on the mountain, and as ours shall be one day (Phil. 3:21). For now, the transformation is interior as we renounce “*disgraceful, underhanded ways*” and eschew dishonest, deceitful ways of interpreting God’s word. Our glory is neither apparent, nor complete, for as we continue to struggle with sin, this glory is often not manifest to us. It must be revealed. And so it is through the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, for “*only through Christ is [the veil] taken away.*”

It’s through this Gospel — the good news — of “*the Son of Man [who] must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again*” (Mark 8:31), that Jesus announced to His disciples six days earlier, that God by His grace shines into our hearts the “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,*” for our hearts are naturally places of darkness. As Jesus says, out of our hearts proceed “*evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander*” (Matt. 15:19). But the Word is “*a lamp shining in a dark place*” and by it, “*the day dawns and the morning star rises in [our] hearts*” (2 Pet. 1:19), that is, we come to look to Jesus and to trust in Him.

That’s why the Father says to us, “*Listen to Him.*” For everything that Jesus accomplished for our salvation is given in our hearing Him. How can you believe in that which you have not heard? You can’t! Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:14,17). Salvation is not about OUR ideas forged in darkness or OUR thoughts corrupted by sin or OUR opinions which deceive us or OUR fallen ways of thinking. Salvation is about “*Listening to HIM.*”

Therefore, listen to Jesus. Listen to Him tell you that He came to serve, that He came to ransom you, that He came to do the Father’s work, that He came to lay down His life for you. Listen to Jesus tell you that He was not sent to the world to condemn the world, but to save it. Listen to Him tell you that it’s the Father’s will that everyone look to the Son and believe in Him that you might have eternal life.

Listen to Jesus tell you that He came to fulfill all righteousness, that He is your righteousness, that He wraps you in that righteousness in Holy Baptism.

Listen to Him tell you that this Baptism is your rebirth by water and the Spirit, and that it gives you entrance to the kingdom of heaven.

Listen to Jesus tell you that He came not for the healthy but for the sick. That He came for the weak and the troubled that He might have mercy on them. Listen to Jesus cry out from the Cross, imploring the Father to forgive the sinners that put Him there, that is to *“forgive you.”* Listen to Jesus absolve you, sinners, through your pastor who forgives you all your sins according to His command. Listen to Jesus tell you of the food that endures to eternal life, and then let Him give it to you today in the Supper of His own body and blood for your forgiveness.

Are you a good listener? If you are, good for you. Mrs. Nagy teaches our LSU students about listening. STARS, she calls it: SIT up tall; TRACK the speaker; ASK and answer with voice; RESPECT always.

If you’re a good listener, you probably do these things naturally. You give your full attention to the speaker, turning off and putting away everything that can distract. You probably listen to understand and not to respond, and if you do respond, your response may be a question to clarify — so you can understand better. You don’t disrespect the speaker or mischaracterize what he or she said.

Certainly to listen well is not to fall in love with your own voice as Peter did. Excited to be near the transfigured Jesus, with Moses and Elijah, Peter just started talking to be talking: *“Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.”* And Mark tells us he did this not knowing *“what to say.”* That’s why the Father cuts him off, speaking from the cloud. *“Stop talking, Peter.” “Listen to my beloved Son.”*

Don’t be confused, though. Jesus didn’t achieve your salvation by His speaking. That was done by His cross. There Jesus earned the forgiveness of your sins. But your forgiveness is given you through the gospel word and sacraments. As Luther taught, Jesus *“determined once to achieve [your salvation],”* but to distribute it *“continuously, before and after [His coming], from the beginning to the end of the world”* by listening to Him (Luther’s Works, 40:213-4).

So listen to Jesus, especially as He forgives you. Those words are imbued with the power of His cross. Listen to Jesus. His words are your salvation, for His are the words of eternal life. Listen to Jesus and be built up in your faith, transformed into the image of the transfigured Christ, transformed at length from an internal and hidden glory now to an external and eternal glory to be revealed when Jesus comes again in His glory.

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