

A Voice of Confidence

June 4, 2017

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An important part of my job is keeping a finger on the pulse of our culture. It helps me apply God's word to our lives as a church family in a way that's directly connected to what we are experiencing and hearing in our world today. Something I've been reading a lot about (and maybe you are hearing and maybe even feeling yourself) is the crisis of credibility. We don't seem to know who we can trust or believe anymore. So many of the authorities in our world have proven themselves untrustworthy. We want to believe our politicians and in some cases we can. But even the framers of our constitution feared politicians would take advantage of the public's trust; that proves itself true more than is appropriate. That's why we have strong protections for free speech and a free press. So, when can't believe the government, believe the press. How's that working for you? We can see their biases pretty easily, too; we've grown suspicious to the press (or parts of it, at least) for good reasons. Our institutions of higher learning are becoming more polarized so it's hard to trust our intellectual authorities. Economic scandals like Enron, Wells Fargo, and the banking fiasco of 2008 has eroded trust in the area of commerce. And sadly, many have lost trust in religious institutions. We've heard about big scandals like the one in the Roman Catholic church concerning the abuse of children. But we also have little scandals in small country churches. Ken Nabi, our new Regional President of Converge Great Lakes shared with us pastors that in the last 12 months 3 Senior pastors were removed from ministry due to moral failures. No wonder we have a crisis of credibility; no wonder we don't know who we can believe or trust.

We're picking up our study of the Gospel of Luke today; we're in chapter 9. Luke has been trying to convince us, the readers, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He is the appointed one of God, the one we should follow. Luke has tried to prove all of these things by telling us about Jesus' power, Jesus' compassion, Jesus' teaching and his miracles. Luke keeps piling up the evidence so we're left with just one conclusion: Jesus is the Messiah. We need to follow him.

But what if we still don't believe? What if we're suspicious of all the evidence? What if we're still struggling with a crisis of credibility? Luke wants to remove all barriers to faith. He wants to show you, the reader, that Jesus really is all that he says he is; that he really can forgive sins. That he really does have authority over your life and my life. That he really has the mercy and power to help us in our times of need. So he tells us one more story where God himself communicates directly that Jesus is the one. There's one last authority that you can believe (that you must believe); let's read Luke 9:28-36 (READ).

The word *transfiguration* isn't found in this passage, but that's what this event is often called - the transfiguration of Jesus. The word means "change of form or appearance," which is an obvious reference to how Jesus' appearance changed in this story. Vs. 29 says his face changed and his clothing became dazzling white. If you're not an OT junkie you might miss a lot

of the significance in this passage. Now, most of us are not OT junkies, but the original readers would be thoroughly aware of what is found in the OT. So, when there's illusion after illusion, reference after reference to OT stories and themes in this account, it's wise of us to see the connections God intends for us to see. The theme of the Exodus is hard to miss in this passage.

The Exodus is the story of how delivered his people from slavery in Egypt to their home, the Promised Land. There are a number of images referenced in Luke 9 that were predominantly featured in the Exodus story. Let me highlight them.

The mountain - God met Moses on top of Mount Sinai to give the people the precious law of God. The mountain was the place where God would meet with his servant; this mountain was holy. If anyone touched the mountain God said they would die. So for many, many days the people waited for Moses to come down from the mountain to instruct them on the ways of God. Here in this story, it's on top of the mountain that Jesus went to pray, was met by Moses and Elijah, and where God affirmed him as his son.

Jesus' face - When Moses came down from the mountain after spending 40 days with God, he didn't know that his face beamed with brightness; God's holiness rub off on him. It startled the people so much that Moses would wear a veil to cover his face so the people wouldn't be so distracted by what they saw. Ex. 34:29 says it plainly that Moses face radiated light because he had been talking with God. He was so impacted by God's glory that it shone from his own face. Now Jesus' face is radiating glory, too, symbolizing that Jesus, also, has a special relationship with God like Moses.

Moses - One of the visitors was Moses himself. Moses had the most incredible job; it was agonizingly hard. But with it's hardships came special privileges. The scriptures say Moses talked to God as one friend talks to another. Moses was venerated by the people of Israel. To get Moses' stamp of approval was like getting God's.

Departure - Look what vs. 31 says; it says that Moses and Elijah talked to Jesus about his departure, which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Do you know what the Greek word for *departure* is? Exodus. Like, Luke isn't trying to be coy, is he? He's just laying it out there.

The most significant illusion to the Exodus motif is actually the cloud. Do you see that there in vs. 34-35 (READ)? That's exactly how God met his people on Mount Sinai. In Exodus 19:9 we read, "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.'" And then throughout the rest of the Exodus story, God always shows up in a cloud. Now, why a cloud? Well, the cloud represents the mysterious and unknowable nature of God. He's beyond understanding; he can't be controlled. The cloud shields our vision where we can't live by sight, but instead we must live by faith. But while they couldn't see, they knew. This is God. In Ex.

20:21 we read, “The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.”

So, when Luke says over and over again *a cloud, a cloud* we readers are supposed to make this direct connection - he’s talking about God! God is here! As amazing as it is to see Elijah and Moses talking with Jesus, as shocking as it is to see Jesus’ face beaming and clothed in dazzling white, this takes the cake. The God who descended on Mt. Sinai, who gave the people of God the perfect law of God, is now here himself! That’s why it says in vs. 34 “and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.” Well, that sounds about right. When the God of the universe shows up your first response is going to be overwhelming fear and awe.

And not only does God show up in a cloud, but he speaks. Vs. 35 says, “And a voice came out of the cloud.” What does God say? Two things. Look at the first statement. “This is my Son, my Chosen One.” That’s what Luke has been trying to show for the last several chapters. When Jesus calms the storm the disciples ask, “Who then is this that he commands the winds and the water, and they obey him?” Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” That’s the burden of Luke; he’s trying to answer one of the most important questions you and I will ever face - who is Jesus of Nazareth? And now we have the last, definitive answer from God himself. Jesus is the Son of God, the Chosen One.

Friends, I don’t believe it’s a stretch in the least to say to you today that you never have and you never will come to a more important question than this one. We have many, many important questions in our lives. Who will be my friends? When will I tell the truth? Can I trust my family? Who should I marry? What should I devote my life to? What will I die for? How you answer the most important question will determine how you answer every other question you ever face: who is Jesus of Nazareth? And God himself is telling you the answer - Jesus is the Son of God; the Chosen One of God. He is the first and the last; he is the Morning Star; he is the Ancient of Days. He is the Superhero of superheroes. He is the Ruler of rulers. He is the Judge of the living and the dead. He is the One that all of life revolves around. He is the One that if you get right you get all of life right and if you get wrong you get all of life wrong. Has God given you eyes to see what God says of Jesus?

The second thing God says from the cloud is the most natural, most expected thing he could say after telling us that Jesus is the Son of God, the Chosen One. Do you see it? Vs. 36 - listen to him! Doesn’t that make perfect sense? If Jesus is all that God says that he is, listening to him is exactly the thing to do.

Nothing says, “I believe you. I trust you,” then listening. Are you aware of that? Do you know that Jesus draws a straight line from our listening to him to our love for him? Jesus says in John 10:27, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” But what if you ask Jesus, “Jesus, what if your sheep don’t follow you?” Do you know how he would answer you? Very calmly, I’m thinking, Jesus would say, “Well, then they are not my sheep.” But you may retort back and say, “But let’s say they are your sheep. They received you. They say they

love you. They really are your sheep.” Jesus would reply, “Then they will listen to me.” Disciples of Jesus listen; it’s that simple. Those who don’t listen are not his disciples.

If you gave your daughter or grand daughter instructions, “go clean your room,” and then she didn’t, you might ask, “How come she didn’t listen?” And you might even ask her, “How come you didn’t listen to me?” And she might answer, “But, I did. I heard that you said I should clean my room. And I was planning on cleaning my room. I even wanted to clean my room. I just didn’t get around to it.” You might patiently says, “Ok, I understand. But let me be really clear right now: I want you to go do that now.” If she says, “Alright,” and she proceeds out the door, hops onto her bike, and rides off with her friends would you conclude that she listened to you? If you think that’s listening, that might explain why parenting isn’t going well for you. That’s not listening.

There are voices everywhere; right, my friends? The voices are demanding a hearing; they want us to listen. Political voices. Cultural voices. Academic, economic and even religious voices. Those voices are trying to persuade you about what is true, good and beautiful. And some of them are pretty convincing, especially the ones that affirm what we already think and want. But God is towering over all of these voices today telling us, “FBC, Jesus is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him! Listen to what he says is true, good and beautiful.” This is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus; to listen to Jesus.

Now, practically, what does that mean? Literally speaking, how do we listen to Jesus? Ok, point blank; here it is. Obey what Jesus says in faith. What does that mean; the faith part? It means that our trust and faith in Jesus motivates our obedience. It means we do what Jesus says because we believe He’s God’s Son, God’s Chosen One. Because we believe He is true, good and beautiful. We obey because of what we believe. And how do we know what Jesus says? What do we listen to? Right here. His word. (John 8:31-32) *If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.* The Word of Christ. That’s what you listen to.

#### Questions for the Week

- What cultural voices did you once listen to or respect that you have now grown suspicious of? How come?
- What was most impactful from today’s sermon?
- Meditate on the significance of listening to Jesus. Ask God to change you and how you hear the voice of Jesus.