

Sunday 27th February 2022
Glynde Lutheran Church
Sermon on Luke 9:28 – 36
Theme: “Who are you listening to?”
“Listen to Jesus in all aspects of your life”

Introduction:

I want you to do something for me, as we start this message time.... Could you listen with me to the sounds that are around us here...

Now could you think with me for a while about the sounds *and the voices* that surround you in your life.... There are the voices of your family and your friends, the voices of people in the TV shows and the movies that you watch, the voices that you hear on the radio and on the internet, the voices who speak to you from your online resources or through the pages of the newspapers or the magazines that you read, *and so on*.

Can I ask you, “Who of them are you are you listening to, *really listening to?*” That’s the question I want to ask you this morning, and have you think about: ‘Who is it that you are listening to, as you try to work out how to live your life?’”

And I want us to think about who God wants us to listen to.... Let’s look at what God has to say to us about this in our Bible reading for this morning: Luke’s account of the transfiguration of Jesus.

Part 1: Listen to Jesus...

In our Bible reading for this morning, God shows us and tells us who to listen to. Let's hear again what Luke tells us in our Bible reading:

About a week after Jesus had said these things, about suffering and dying and rising to life to life again on the third day, Jesus took James and John up a hill to pray.

As Jesus sets out to head to Jerusalem to suffer and to die for the sins of everyone as God's Suffering Servant, Jesus goes with his inner circle of disciples up a hill to pray, *presumably in order to seek God's approval for what he is about to do.* As one writer puts it:

There was one thing that Jesus would never do – he would never take any step without the approval of God. In this scene, that is what we see him seeking and receiving (*Barclay, Luke, p.123*).

God confirms to Jesus, and to the disciples, although they don't understand at this stage, that Jesus self-understanding of himself as

God's Son and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 is right: *that he will suffer and die for the sins of humanity.* God does this in two ways: by *showing* Jesus that he is right in his understanding, and by *telling* him that he is right in his understanding.

Listen again to what Luke tells us happened:

While Jesus was praying, his face changed its appearance, and his clothes became dazzling white.

Suddenly two men were there talking with him. They were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in heavenly glory and talked with Jesus about the way in which he would soon fulfil God's purpose by dying in Jerusalem, lit. "and spoke of his Exodus, *his departure*, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem".

Peter and his companions were sound asleep, but they woke up and saw Jesus' glory and the two men who were standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, how good it is that we are here! We will make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (He did not really know what he was saying).

While he was speaking, a cloud, *the cloud of God's presence*, appeared and covered them with its shadow; and the disciples were afraid as the cloud came over them. A voice said from the cloud, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen – listen to him!"

When the voice stopped, there was Jesus all alone. The disciples kept quiet about this, and told no one at that time anything they had seen (*Luke 9:28-26*).

In the first instance, then, this is a confirmation for Jesus, *and the disciples*, of Jesus' self-understanding of his mission for God (*Marshall, Luke, p. 380; Barclay, p. 123-124*).

God shows Jesus, *by transforming him*, and tells him that he is right in his understanding of himself as being God's Son, and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, *by speaking to him from the heavens*.

But in the second instance, it is a wonderful pointer for us today as to who we should listen to, and who we should trust.

Part 2: ...in all aspects of your life!

1. With regard to your relationship with God

First and foremost in our relationship with God.... Don't listen to those voices around you which say, "There is no God" (e.g. Richard Dawkins in "The God Delusion").

Or those voices which say that "you have to do certain things to make it with God" (e.g., other religions like Islam; Christian sects like the JW's and the Mormons). That's what the religious leaders and others were saying way back in Jesus' day: that if you keep God's Laws, then you'll be right with God (e.g., Mark 7:1-13; cf. Dunn, "Unity and Diversity", p. 63).

Listen rather to Jesus, God's Son, who says:

- * **"Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, of trying to obey this law and that law all the time, and I will give you rest"** (Matt. 11:28).
- * **"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served; he came to serve and to give his life to redeem many people"** (Mark 10:45; cf. Isa. 53:10-12).
- * **"Then Jesus took a cup, gave thanks to God, and gave it to them. "Drink it, all of you", he said. "This is my blood, which seals God's covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"** (Matt. 26:27-28; cf. Isa. 53:12; Jer. 31:34).

Jesus is here telling us that we don't need to do things in order to make it with God and that he has done it all for us! Jesus is saying in effect to us here:

"I've done it all for you! That's why I suffered and died on a cross: to make it possible for you to live in a child-Father relationship with God, as God's forgiven children. Just put your trust in me and follow me! (e.g., Matt. 9:9; cf. Rom. 3:28; 5:1; 8:1).

2. With regard to how you live your life

1. In your relationships with others

And secondly, listen to Jesus, *and to him alone*, in regard to how you live your life: in your relationship with others, for example....

Don't listen to those voices around you which say, "Look out for Number One always!" and "Love only those who are good to you"; and who say "If someone hurts you, dump them and try to get even with them".

Listen rather to what Jesus, God's Son, says about how to live your life:

- * **"Love one another, just as I have loved you"** (*John 15:12; cf. 13:34; Mark 10:43-45*).

- * **"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you..."** (*Matt. 5:38-39*).

- * **"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your friends, hate your enemies'. But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be the sons, the children, of your Father in heaven** (*Matt. 6:43-45*).

- * **"This, then, is how you should pray:
'Our Father in heaven...
Forgive us the wrongs we have done,
As we forgive the wrongs that others have done
to us...'**

If you forgive others the wrongs they have done to you, your Father in heaven will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father in heaven will not forgive the wrongs you have done" (*Matt. 6:9-15*)

2. *So far as money and possessions are concerned*

And listen to Jesus, also, so far as your money and possessions are concerned.... Don't listen to those voices around you which say, "Get as much money and as many possessions for yourself as you can, so that you can be secure and happy in your life".

No, rather listen to Jesus, God's Son, who says:

- * **"Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal. Instead, store up riches for yourself in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal. For your heart will always be where your riches are"** (*Matt. 6:19-21*).

- * **"No one can be a slave of two masters; he will hate one and love the other; he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money"** (*Matt. 6:24*).

- * **"Sell all your belongings and give the money to the poor..."** (*where Jesus, I'm convinced, is speaking in hyperbole, in exaggeration, but he is making the point that we should be generous in the extreme in the way that we use our money and our possessions to serve the poor around us*).

I love the way that Tony Campolo explores this whole area in his books and his preaching. In an interview in a book entitled *Open House*, Tony says in this regard:

"The Jesus of Scripture is very, very different than even the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, for instance, you get the concept of tithing. But when you come to the New Testament, Jesus never asks us to tithe – he calls for total surrender...."

I contend that if you're going to be a follower of Jesus, then it's all right to make lots and lots of money – but it's not all right to keep it. If you're going to follow Jesus, you've got to live sacrificially. You have to use all the resources that God has placed in your hands, insofar as it is possible, to take care of your own family at a simple lifestyle, but then to minister to others. So I get into trouble when I say *that* I don't see how a person can be a Christian, a follower of Jesus, and own a BMW.

Just imagine Jesus was living in Brisbane, he needed to get a car, and he had \$80,000. He could buy a second-hand car from Hertz for \$12,000 – a perfectly usable car that would last the next fifteen years if he takes care of it – and he could use the other \$68,000 to feed the hungry in the world. Or he could take that \$80,000 and go and buy a BMW. Which do you think Jesus would do if he was in the world today?" (*Open House, Vol. 1, p. 153f*).

3. *In the use of your sexuality*

And listen to Jesus, also, so far as the way you use your God-given sexuality is concerned... Don't listen to those voices around you which say that it's OK to sleep around and to go from one partner to another....

People in our society practice what has often been called "serial monogamy": they live with one person for a while faithfully, or *relatively faithfully*, before moving on to the next person and then the next person, *all the time looking for love, and the ideal person to love....*

I'd like to suggest that a better term for what is happening in our society is "serial divorce"....

Because this is what is happening again and again in

people's lives, with all the attendant hurts and scars that go with this: for the adults involved, and for children of those involved....

Yes, and those of us who have gone through broken relationships and divorce know this to be true....

Don't listen to the voices around you which say that this is the way to live so far as the use of your sexuality is concerned. Listen rather to Jesus, God's Son, as he talks about God's plan for the use of our sexuality.

Matthew tells us:

Some Pharisees, *religious leaders*, came to Jesus and tried to trap him by asking, "Does our Law allow a man to divorce his wife for whatever reason he wishes?"

Jesus answered, "Haven't you read the scripture that says that in the beginning the Creator made people male and female? And God said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will become one'. So they are no longer two, but one. Man must not separate, then, what God has joined together" (Matt. 19:3-6).

God wants us to use our sexuality in the safety and security of marriage, where we can love one another and care for our children (e.g., see "*Sex before marriage*", chapter 3 of "*Searching Issues*" by Nicky Gumbel).

By the way, I don't think any of us can think about the areas of how God wants us to live our life without feeling a sense of guilt....

You know, I can't! But thank God for His incredible, life-

transforming forgiveness, *without which we would be all totally lost.*

3. *With regard to the future*

And thirdly, listen to Jesus with regard the future, and what is going to happen after we die. Don't listen to the voices around you who say, "Death is the end", or the voices who say, "Don't worry about death and dying, because when you die, you'll go to heaven to be with all your family and friends who have died before you. That's where all good people go when they die".

You know, the one thing that really strikes me as a pastor, as *I deal with people facing death and dying*, is that most people haven't any framework, or much of a framework, to face death and dying. Most people content themselves with the "airy-fairy" notion that they'll survive death and go and live where all 'good' people go: to 'heaven'. Their views are simply a product of wishful thinking, combined with a distorted understanding of some Christian thoughts.

Don't listen to these voices around you about what is going to happen in the future, but rather listen to Jesus who says:

- * **"Don't be afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul, *one's inner life force*: rather be afraid of God who can destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt. 10:28).**

- * **"These, then, will be sent off to eternal punishment, but the righteous will go to eternal life" (Matt. 25:46).**

- * **"Don't be worried and upset. Believe in God and believe also in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you.... And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take**

you to myself, so that you will be where I am....

I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me" (John 14:1-6).

Jesus spoke again and again about the reality of final judgment for our "sins", and the reality of "hell" as a place of final separation from God. Equally strongly, though, Jesus spoke about the reality of life with God in God's new Kingdom to come for all those who "believe" in God and in Jesus as their Saviour, *for all those who are "blessed by my Father" and have the Father's forgiveness (cf. Matt. 25:34).*

So, can I ask you, "Who are you listening to, as you live out your life?" There are so many voices around us, telling us this and to telling us that, telling us to do this and to do that, telling us to go this way or that way. Which voice should we listen to? Well God tells us clearly in our Bible reading. Luke relates that a voice from the cloud of God's presence said about Jesus:

"This is my Son, whom I have chosen – listen to him!"

Are you listening to Jesus, God's Son, in all aspects of your life: with regard to your relationship with God, with regard to how you are living your life, and with regard to how you are approaching your future? Jesus is the One who God wants you and me to be listening to!! This is how God wants us to live out our life: listening to His Son, Jesus.

Conclusion:

As Robin Mann writes in the song that we're about to sing:

**Breezes whisper without meaning,
sands lie silent on the beach;
earth has no self-explanation –
only one can give it speech.**

Listen to him – Jesus, the eternal one.

Listen to him – angels sang when he was born.

***Listen to him – now the word of God is known
in his only Son (ATE #239).***