

## “Listen to Him”

Isn't it good that God knows the people that we pray for even though we don't know them? There was church that decided rather than announce about people needing prayer they would just pray about them during the announcements. And one of the brothers stood up to pray and he began to pray, “Father, we ask you to bless our sister Agnes McDonald who is in Forth Park Hospital, room 205 and eh, excuse me Lord she is in 206.” As though God might go to 205 and say, “I thought Agnes was in here?”

It is good to know that God sees past all of our mistakes. He knows what we need even when we won't verbalise it. He is awfully good at listening to us, wouldn't you say? How about the opposite, how good are we at listening to him?

Please turn your bibles to **Mark 9**. What is the message of God for **Birmingham**, for England? What is the message from God that he wants you to take to your neighbour today? What is the message that God wants you to here? Do you know what I like about some films on television? They can do wonders with special effects, Films like Titanic, Twister, Jaws and so on.

**Mark 9:2-5**. “After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here.”

**I wonder what it would have been like to have been there?** To have walked up the mountain alone and then let God do the special effects. Then let God get your attention. How would it have been to be Peter, James and John kneeling and praying as one of the other gospels tells us they were when all of a sudden, they tug one another's jackets and saying, “**Peter, Peter is it just me or is Jesus' head glowing a little?**” And the more he glows, the more they say, “**He's definitely glowing**”.

We read these passages just like, and they went and got a drink and they went and got a burger and chips. Just as though it was the most normal thing in the world for Jesus' head to begin to glow. One of the gospel writers tells us he glowed as bright as lightening. The jaws of those men dropped, I would imagine them backing away, even from the Lord that they knew and here is glowing as though God is ripping open the flesh of Christ and letting divinity itself peak out.

And as that bright light is shining and as Jesus is glowing and what an amazing scene, it just gets better. For all of a sudden appearing with them are Moses and Elijah and it seems the disciples knew and recognised Moses and Elijah. **How did they know?**

There were no pictures or photographs of them for them to recognise them from. I some how don't think they wore, “**Hello, my name is Moses name tags**”. No I imagine there was something amazing and miraculous going on, not only in their eyes but also in their minds as well as God was saying, “**May I have your attention please?**” It seems he still fully hasn't got it, for though Moses and Elijah representing the Law and the Prophets are they're talking to Jesus. Peter as many of us often do felt the need to comment.

**Are you married to someone like that?** Someone who thinks like “**Silence**” is the Lord saying, “**Speak up**”. If you're going for a run in the car, they feel the need to fill every moment with a discussion of something. Peter's problem was that he needed to connect everything with something he needed to do. Peter always jumped up and said, “**Well Lord I guess I need to say something**”.

Peter was always the one who would jump up and say; “**I'm not going to let that happen to you Lord, well, I'll be the last one to leave you Lord**”. And the Lord finally had to say, “**Peter, will you just hush up, put that sword down, before the rooster crows 3 times you'll deny me**”.

And Peters still doing it, he's here on the mountain prior to that and he's here on the mountain and everyone is saying, “**Look at this**”. And Peter jumps up and **what does he say? Did you ever think about his comments? Read his comments**.

He sounds like lecturer giving a lecture at college. “**Were very glad to be here.**”

That's literally what he says; he jumps up and says, "Well, I'm glad I came here today." "It is good for us to be here Lord". James and John are like; "Will you hush up". But Peter keeps going he says, "You know what we need to do something about this, we need to build a shelter for Moses and a shelter for Elijah"

And it is as though the Lord said, "Give him the next special effect" because scripture just says, "They were enveloped by a cloud". It is almost like God was saying, "Peter, be quite" But a cloud seems to be the only thing that will stop Peter from talking. Now Jesus is glowing like a lighthouse in the fog.

Moses and Elijah are gone and then the ultimate special effect. The voice of God, wow, to have been there. It is very seldom in the New Testament that the voice of God is heard by men. But Peter, James and John heard a voice speak from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him". The N. I. V says, "Listen to him"

It's as though God has finally got Peter up there and, Do you notice what comes prior to the mount of transfiguration? Do you notice what comes right before it? Peter giving his wonderful confession in chapter 8 when he says, "You're the Christ, Jesus warned him not to tell anyone about him". Peter has all of a sudden got it about who Jesus is, one of the other gospel writers tells us that is because God gave it to him. But Peter is still not doing what God needs him to do, even James and John must not be either, for God himself has to speak and say, "You have one job and one job alone today and it's just 3 words, "Listen to him".

Through the years we have built cathedrals to honour Jesus, people have fought wars to honour Jesus, people have gone on fasts to honour Jesus and people have thrown banquets to honour Jesus, people have married multiple wives and people have remained celibate to honour Jesus. And God calls out and says, "Before you go building your booths, or making your plans, before you do what you think will honour me, will you please stop and, "Listen to him".

What is Christ's message, what is Christ's call? If you are the master and I'm the servant Lord, alright, I've got the point, I've stood on the mountain, I've been silenced by the fog and the thunder and the amazing nature of your voice. When you listen and watch the old television films about God, films like the 10 commandments, God's voice was always very deep.

"Listen to him" It was always "Listen to him" so that people would fall silent and say, "Speak Lord, I'm listening". From what you know about Jesus, what do you think he would say if you were toe to toe, knee to knee, eye to eye with the Lord and said to him, "Speak Lord I'm listening."

There was a man named Dave Busby who did a survey among young and old Christians and he asked them all, that very question. He asked them, "If right now today, you were to be called in for a interview with the Lord, if you were to be given the opportunity to sit toe to toe, knee to knee, eyeball to eyeball with Jesus what would he say?" Imagine if that this moment you sat with God himself, knowing that God knows everything about you, what would he want to say to you today about you, what word would God have to give you right now at this point of your life?

Let me shock you with the information from this survey. I want you to imagine just for a moment that you are there and God is sitting opposite you. And for one moment you are there with the Father, toe to toe, knee to knee, eye to eye and you've closed your mind to everything else and you turn to him and you say to him, "Speak Lord, I'm listening, what do you want to tell me right now?"

Do you know the No 1 answer was among Christians? God would say, "I am disappointed in you" It would be like God was your mother. God would shake his head and say, "After all I've done for you, after all I've given to you, I thought you'd work hard, I thought you'd be good, I thought you'd do right". "But No, look at you, I just hope you're happy because I am just so disappointed in you." God would simply be saying, "You're not living up, I had high hopes but look at you".

Is it any wonder that people don't want to go to church if that's what they think the message of God is? Is it any wonder that people are saying, "No thank you, I'm really not interested". If they really believe that the message when he says, "Listen to Him" that Jesus is going to say, "My, my, look at the mess you are in, I'm just so disappointed in you".

And the 2<sup>nd</sup> most popular answer is worse than the 1<sup>st</sup>. Because the second group of young and old Christians thought that he would say to them, “It’s not that I’m disappointed with you, but that I am angry with you” They said he would sound like a high school teacher who caught you setting off the fire alarms.

“I have just about had it with you and I’m serious, I mean it, you have not paid attention, I’ve told you what to do and you’ve just gone and done your own thing.” “Don’t you look at me like that, I told you I have had it, Gabriel hold me back, I tell you I am serious, can you spell hell, can you understand what we are talking about here, do the names Annanias and Saphira ring any bells with you?”

I guess we have to laugh about it otherwise we will cry because there are people out in the world that really believe that if they ever hushed up and listened to the Lord, that is what would come out of the Father’s lips. And pardon me but where did they get that idea? Could it be from preachers, could it be from Christians? Could it be that we have so shouted the message that God is going to get you by the neck and say, “I tell you man, I’ve got the power and I’ve got the authority and you better do what is right”.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> group of Christians gave such an interesting answer. They said, they thought that if they ever sat down toe to toe, knee to knee, eyeball to eyeball with God, that God would be smug, that God would say things like, “Well, well, well, look who we have got here, I guess you know what I’m going to say, and I know you know and I know you know that you know I know because I’m God and your not” “Well what are we going to do about this situation, I’m God and I’ve got the authority and you have not been a good boy,” “Oh I bet you want to beg me, well go ahead and beg and maybe, who knows, maybe I might just let you off, then again maybe not.”

I wonder if Satan would be scared stiff if the church was able to stand up and say, “That’s not our God”. Our God does not look down his nose and say, “I don’t know if you’re not exactly perfect, I don’t know if you don’t do it exactly how I tell you.”

Do you know what upsets me? When you ask people, “Are you ready to go to heaven, are you saved?” And they say, “Well, I hope so, I’m maybe so”. Listen, Jesus didn’t die on the cross so that you and I can say, “I hope so”.

There was a woman who went up to her preacher and said, “Brother John, I’m afraid that I haven’t done enough” And she said to her preacher, “Brother John, do you think I have done enough?” And he looked her square in the eyes and said, “Absolutely not”

Nobody does enough, nobody can do enough, but Jesus did plenty on Calvary, Jesus did enough on the cross. So that I do not stand before God who is saying, “Well, I’m not sure if you have done enough”. His Son did plenty plus for me. I’m not going to heaven because I’m so good here; I’m going to heaven because Jesus was so good there. I’m not going to heaven because I performed well here, I’m going to heaven because he performed like no man could on Calvary.

And because he is willing to take the lashes and with every lash say, “Don’t come angels, don’t stop them.” With every spike say, “Hold back Gabriel, don’t stop them, let them do it”. I do not have a God that when I listen to him he says, “Well’ I just don’t know whether I will save you or not, so live in fear.”

The 4<sup>th</sup> and most frightening group said if they were toe to toe knee-to-knee, eye-to-eye with God. They thought that God would say nothing, nothing. For they just weren’t sure if he cared or that he was there at all.

Will you allow me to give you a message from God today? Wherever you are sitting, who ever you are, will you for one moment with me “Listen to him”. If this were you, right now, you say, “Mike, you don’t know the mess my life is in”. You’re right, I don’t, I don’t need to, God does. “Mike, you don’t know what I faced in my house this week”. You’re right, I don’t, but God does. “You don’t know the secret sin Mike that is hidden in my life.” You’re right, I don’t, but God does.

Do you know what God wants to say to you today? As you sit there, I want you to imagine that you are sitting in front of God and I want you to imagine that God is in front of you, looking into your life knowing every thought you’ve ever thought. Every deed you’ve ever done, good or bad, every good thing this church has seen, the good things they haven’t seen, the bad things they haven’t seen. God knows the intent of your heart.

And as you are sitting there with God, you say, “Speak Lord I’m listening”.

Do you know what God would say right now to you? He would say this, “I love you, that’s what I want you to know.” “No matter what anybody ever says to you, I love you so much, I love you with all the universe, I love you that I let my Son die for you.”

That’s it, that is it. If we would be quite long enough, God wants to reach out and wrap his arms around and say, “I love you”. We say, “But God I’m so sorry,” he says, “Shh, I love you” “Oh, but Lord I” and he says, “Will you look at the eyes of Jesus on the cross and “Listen to him”. “For God soooooo loved the world”.

Satan’s goal is to keep that message off the streets of Birmingham. Satan’s goal is to keep that message bottled up in the book, Satan’s goal is to keep you and I from going home and saying to our children I’ve got a message from God, And our children saying, “Oh no, what does he say?” “He loves you”. He loves you with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. “But daddy I’ve done bad” and he loves you. “But daddy I’ve done good” and he loves you. You can’t do anything that will make him love you more because he’s loved you completely and totally.

I wonder how we can change this town, our cities, and our country if we would stop long enough to listen. And part of the challenge of that is, if you go out and try to share that message without hearing it from the Lord, people won’t believe you. Because we don’t look like we believe it, we go out and say, “The Lord loves you, he does, he loves you, he loves you.” Sometimes we are so busy when we say it and it gets to the point where they are saying to us, “Maybe we can talk God into loving you too.”

God has already decided what he wants to say to you, it’s already written what he wants to say to you. Because, Paul writes in Ephesians, “Because of His great LOVE for us, he made us alive in Christ Jesus.”

Do you’re children know that God loves them? Do you’re spouses know that God loves them? But friends, we will never be able to make that commitment to one another until we have received a hug from the Lord. Because without ever receiving unconditional love, we don’t know how to give it.

We are not Christians based on the strength of our love for God. We are transformed people based on the strength of His love for us. And the message this community is waiting to hear from the Great Barr church of Christ. Not from a pulpit, it’s easy to say from up hear. What they want to see in your homes and in my home and in the lives of us in this town is we’re a church that not only says it but we do it. We’re here not just to say, “God loves you” but may I be the one to give you the hug from him. May I be the one who wraps my arms around you and say, “God wants you to have this”? Not this, (Fist) not that, but this.

I have got 2 children and I am convinced that if my kids never learn all the books of the bible, if they never learn all the disciples names, if they only learn one thing from their mother and father. I pray somehow that they can see and feel and know that their God loves them so much that they can’t do anything in order for him to love them better.

Will you let God hug you today? The bible says that we are the body of the Christ, his arms and legs. When you have a minute today, will you go out your way to hug someone on behalf of God because a lot of you look like you could do with a hug from the Lord.