***Shiloh United Methodist Church***

Mark 8:31-9:8 Rev. Tyler Amundson February 28, 2021

Psalm 22:22-31

***We Are Called To Listen***

# **Mark 8:31-9:8 and Psalm 22:23-31 (CEB)**

# Mark 8:31-9:8

**31**Then Jesus began to teach his disciples: “The Human One[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+8%3A31-9%3A8%2C+Psalm+22%3A23-31&version=CEB#fen-CEB-24527a)] must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and the legal experts, and be killed, and then, after three days, rise from the dead.” **32**He said this plainly. But Peter took hold of Jesus and, scolding him, began to correct him. **33**Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, then sternly corrected Peter: “Get behind me, Satan. You are not thinking God’s thoughts but human thoughts.”

**34**After calling the crowd together with his disciples, Jesus said to them, “All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. **35**All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me and because of the good news will save them. **36**Why would people gain the whole world but lose their lives? **37**What will people give in exchange for their lives? **38**Whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this unfaithful and sinful generation, the Human One[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+8%3A31-9%3A8%2C+Psalm+22%3A23-31&version=CEB#fen-CEB-24534b)] will be ashamed of that person when he comes in the Father’s glory with the holy angels.” **9 1**Jesus continued, “I assure you that some standing here won’t die before they see God’s kingdom arrive in power.”

### Jesus transformed

**2**Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and brought them to the top of a very high mountain where they were alone. He was transformed in front of them, **3**and his clothes were amazingly bright, brighter than if they had been bleached white. **4**Elijah and Moses appeared and were talking with Jesus. **5**Peter reacted to all of this by saying to Jesus, “Rabbi, it’s good that we’re here. Let’s make three shrines—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” **6**He said this because he didn’t know how to respond, for the three of them were terrified.

**7**Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice spoke from the cloud, “This is my Son, whom I dearly love. Listen to him!” **8**Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

# Psalm 22:23-31

**23**All of you who revere the Lord—praise him!  
    All of you who are Jacob’s descendants—honor him!  
    All of you who are all Israel’s offspring—  
        stand in awe of him!  
**24**Because he didn’t despise or detest  
    the suffering of the one who suffered—  
    he didn’t hide his face from me.  
    No, he listened when I cried out to him for help.

**25**I offer praise in the great congregation  
    because of you;  
    I will fulfill my promises  
    in the presence of those who honor God.  
**26**Let all those who are suffering eat and be full!  
    Let all who seek the Lord praise him!  
        I pray your hearts live forever!  
**27**Every part of the earth  
    will remember and come back to the Lord;  
    every family among all the nations will worship you.  
**28**Because the right to rule belongs to the Lord,  
    he rules all nations.  
**29**Indeed, all the earth’s powerful  
    will worship him;[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+8%3A31-9%3A8%2C+Psalm+22%3A23-31&version=CEB#fen-CEB-14234a)]  
    all who are descending to the dust  
    will kneel before him;  
    my being also lives for him.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+8%3A31-9%3A8%2C+Psalm+22%3A23-31&version=CEB#fen-CEB-14234b)]  
**30**Future descendants will serve him;  
    generations to come will be told about my Lord.  
**31**They will proclaim God’s righteousness  
        to those not yet born,  
        telling them what God has done.

I remember my friend's face, in fact I think faces is all I remember from the situation. My friend's face was red, and I mean as red as the flame on our church logo. Mad would have not described the emotion, it deserves something with two syllables at minimum, an emotion with more gravity, “fury” perhaps. My friend's face was the color of fury and he stood up in class to confront our professor.

Our professor had just shared a theory that is central to Christian faith, especially if you believe faith can change you and help you grow. My professor who had grown up in a country where ethnic tensions had been a part of growing up. His face was not one of fury, and calm is another one syllable word that doesn't do it justice, instead I think two words would be more appropriate, he showed “quiet determination.”

The premise he placed out there was to be a faithful Christian you have consider all knowledge, all sources, and if you are a Christian who believes God has any ability to change anything, that there might be some piece of God’s wisdom even in something you have been raised to see as evil. In other words you, have to listen to every one because they are a child of God, and consider their wisdom might carry part of the God’s spark.

The spectacle of the moment was fascinating to me. My friend who was a little taller than me standing up was a good foot and half taller than our professor. My professor had seen much worse in his home country than the rage that was flying his way, but for me this was a new experience. My friend being told he would have to consider ideologies he had been taught were evil, might contain even specks of God’s wisdom was something new to him. He couldn’t assimilate this, because for him it would potentially cause harm to consider these ideologies at all.

One-time later in my life, I would experience this same kind of rage over a choice I made in my church leadership. Again, I saw the same fury my friend had showed. Standing up and the face…the face again was red as a stop sign.

I have seen this rage a lot in pictures this past decade of my life. It is the rage of not being willing, or able to accept that someone different than you might have some part of God’s wisdom too. In human history when we think we have it all figured out, when one group of humans is more right than the other, we end up taking life.

Our scripture today usually falls alongside the story of Elisha and Elijah, that is told on the Sunday before Lent. Today we put it in Lent to focus on something important. We are called to learn that listening may help us see God’s spark in the moment, when we tend to be focused on doing something to make the moment more perfect. We sometimes have to let go and listen to really honor God.

This is the transfiguration tale, a story of a sacred moment that the disciples had when they were trying to understand what Jesus’ was trying to mean by his warnings that he would have to die, and rise again to share God’s message of love.

I want to invite us into the characters climbing the mountain with Jesus, and specifically Peter. Remember Peter’s role in the story he climbs the mountain with Jesus, then has this amazing experience of seeing 3 of the great leaders of his faith surrounded by God’s light, and then what does he do…he offers to build a shrine or a holy housing unit for each of them. The question this leaves me with is, “What did Peter bring up the mountain with him, that he thinks he has what he needs to build a house, not just one, but 3 houses to contain the holy?”

Imagine for a minute if you will that climb up the mountain again with Jesus and his three companions. It probably took a little longer than the one line of text takes to read. These three companions are following Jesus and now we know at least Peter must have something to think he can build 3 structures. We can guess Peter is carrying a pretty heavy pack full of his supplies. As the 3 companions follow Jesus, Peter starts to slow down on the hike. Jesus turns around and says, “You won’t need those things, leave them behind.” Peter is a bit annoyed, because he knows he is going need supplies to raise the tent when he gets to the top. The stuff is getting heavy though, so he asks his other two friends to help out.

Later on his friends and him are breathing heavy, and there is Jesus walking, as if on water, not having the burden of a pack behind him. Jesus says, “You are all so generous to bring those great structures, but we aren’t staying overnight. Leave them behind and let’s enjoy this journey to the mountain top together.” The three look at each other, shake their heads no and continue up the mountain with sweat running down their faces.

A while later Jesus looks behind him and his friends are even farther behind and now they have started to bicker, Peter blames James and John for whining and James and John blame Peter for bringing the things in the first place. They start to argue about the very nature of why they even need to get to the top, who deserves to get there, and who should stay back to guard the supplies they are carrying. Jesus says, “The mountain top is the goal, you can leave those burdens behind.”

As the party crested the top of the mountain there was an amazing view and sun appeared behind Jesus and two other figures appeared. Peter poked his friend and said, “See now I can use my gear to build a tent for each of them.” When suddenly a wind came up and scattered all of the supplies and knocked the three men to their knees. When the three looked up, Jesus was standing there saying, “Incredible isn’t it, those that haven’t seen this beautiful view and had their burdens removed, won’t understand until they see it themselves.”

Peter and the others missed it. I mean they saw part of the brilliance and they got part of the message, but if they had really been listening to Jesus before, and all the way up the mountain, they would have truly experienced a deeply God centered moment. Instead, like we humans we get focused on what we think needs to be done to make the moment right, instead of letting God unfold each moment with the assistance of our gentle actions.

One-time in my early career of preaching I got a concerning email one Sunday after church. The man writing it was clearly angry about some of the stories I had told that day during my message. “How dare you highlight someone who has broken the law, as being a story of God’s actions?!” This was the gist of the email.

I could feel my body tense, anger boiled for a moment, fear slid under my skin, and my anxiety rose. “I need to respond!” was all I could think. I called my mentor and explained the email. She explained that I should respond with care.

I am sure I did not respond with as much care, as concern to be right. It resulted in a few email exchanges in which the conversation became clearly un-resolvable.

Have you gotten in an exchange over an issue or thing and later wish you had made another choice? Wish that like Peter you and looked up and provided for better interaction, instead of closed down and created a rift. To truly listen to the moment, instead of drag along all the things you think you need.

Now, were both these situations, the one with my friend and the one with this gentleman rife with justice issues. Issues of a lack of cultural awareness, openness of heart, racial issues, and more. Christ however calls us to drop the tools and look up, and remember that we are to learn from each other. Unconditional love is not unconditional tolerance, people in these situations needed to learn love, for life to be possible.

There is an old parable that goes this way:

Follow the goat

There was once an old patriarch who led a nomadic life, along with his people and their herds of sheep and goats. The old patriarch had many children, among them a favourite son who cared for the goats. And among the goats this son had a special favourite, whom he loved dearly. This goat was black and white with long, floppy ears. The boy loved to play with this goat, but the goat had a mind of its own and was forever scampering away, getting lost in rocky crevices, and the boy would go searching for him.

The father was very anxious, lest the boy should come to harm while going after the goat. One day the tribe broke camp and set out for new pastures. To the father’s dismay, the boy was nowhere to be found. For three whole days he searched in vain for his son. On the third day he heard the bleating of the goat, but could see no sign of the boy.

Furious that the goat had led the boy to his death, the patriarch took out his dagger and slit the goat’s throat in his rage. And as the goat lay dying, one long floppy ear fell forward. Inside the goat’s ear was a tiny scroll, on which the boy had written a note: “Father, I followed the goat to a cave high in the hills. On the other side of the cave I found the promised land that we have all been looking for. I will stay here and await your arrival with all our people. The goat knows the way. Follow the goat!”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Retelling of a story by William J. Bausch

Friend's as we enter this season in our world and for us to learn to follow Christ. Remember that when fear creeps under your skin, anger rises and the world needs you to first breathe deeply and look up. Or you may take life and miss the promised land.

Shalom and Amen

1. Silf, Margaret. One Hundred More Wisdom Stories. Lion Hudson. Kindle Edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)