

I heard a story recently about a terrible fire in a chemical plant. Several area fire departments responded to the blaze, and quite a crowd from the entire area gathered at a distance to watch. The media was there in helicopters and satellite remote trucks. The president of the company was among the crowd, and he was frantic. He gathered the chiefs of all the fire departments and explained to them that in the midst of the inferno was a safe that contained all the company's super-sensitive documents including the top-secret formulas for all their best-selling products. He pledged to give a \$500,000 donation to the fire department that brought the blaze under control and saved all the super-sensitive documents in the safe.

The chiefs rallied their firemen and women, pulled out all the stops attempting to bring the blaze under control, but it wasn't happening. The fire continued to rage. After quite some time the crowd heard another siren in the distance that kept growing louder. Before long this old beat up, dilapidated 1930's style fire engine filled with a bunch of men in their 60's and 70's came roaring through the crowd, right past all the other fire departments. The truck didn't even slow down as it burst through the front door of the plant and right into the middle of the blazing inferno. Everyone, firefighters, media members and the crowd just gasped thinking about what these guys did. However, before long the fire was under control and this group of aged firefighters stumbled out the front of the plant coughing. Everyone cheered their heroic effort. They saved the safe. A few hours later in front of the gutted plant the president of the company handed the 82-year-old chief a check for half a million dollars. In the press conference that followed, one reporter asked the chief what they planned to do with that incredible reward. He didn't even hesitate. **"These guys already told me they want to buy a new fire engine that has some brakes!"**

I told you that story for a couple of reasons. **First**, I thought it was funny. **But the 2nd and more important reason** is... there is a lesson HERE! **Every story, every situation, every incident has at least two levels to it.**

The first level is "WHAT HAPPENS"-- the facts of what occurred (Who, what, when, where and how). Though sometimes the bare facts are **interesting, sometimes EXCITING**, but most often *the bare facts* are **JUST BARE**.

And example of "What Happened" was the discovery of Penicillin. That was an Exciting time.

BUT at the 2nd level...we have adds MOTIVATION. *It seems to me that why something happens is usually more interesting than what happened.* What might have motivated the discovery of Penicillin? To save the lives of soldiers and the lives of millions of others from diseases that were killing them since the beginning of time.

The question of Why? It add a whole new level. A level of AMAZEMENT. I am sure when it first happened most could not believe it was possible.

A LEVEL THAT MAKES YOU WANT TO "LISTEN."

It seems to me **that "WHY" something happen** is usually **more interesting** than "WHAT" happened, even if "what happened" is a phenomenal event—Like the discovery of Penicillin.

With that kind of thinking process, the Bible becomes very exciting reading to me. Events and situations that could seem like dusty old ancient history come alive with interest and intrigue when you look behind the scenes to the rest of the story. **When you read what happened to Jesus and His disciples**, it is always interesting to ask the question, **"How come God allowed that to happen?" or "Why did God act like that?"**

Our passage for this morning is a prime example to consider **as we think not just about what happened, but why.**

The Transfiguration of Jesus is a very difficult concept to accept. Jesus takes with him Peter, James and John up

on top of a mountain, and upon arriving, Jesus was transfigured, his appearance changed to white and then appearing with him were Moses and Elijah.

Then Peter gets caught up in the moment and wants to stay, but before he can finish his thoughts a voice from a cloud says: *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him."*

In the Epiphany this experience of the Transfiguration is like a book end. At *one end or beginning* you have the ***Baptism of Jesus*** and now at the end of the Epiphany season, you have ***the other book end the Transfiguration.***

And notice, the words from God are similar in both, at Jesus' baptism God says *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* and at the Transfiguration he says, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him."* **Notice the difference.**

God is telling the disciples to “LISTEN TO JESUS.”

For following the Transfiguration, Jesus sets his eyes on Jerusalem. **We are entering the season of Lent, where we will see the glory of Jesus and also the cross of Jesus.**

The Transfiguration shows us the two sides to Jesus, His glory as he is transformed, and His suffering as he leaves the mountain and sets his eyes on Jerusalem and the cross. He tells the disciples after he comes down from the mountain that the Son of Man, Jesus, will be delivered up and killed but on the third day will be raised up. The Cross and the Glory.

For on this mountain, the disciples had a foretaste, or moments glimpse of what heaven would be like. There on that mountain, stood Jesus in all of his glory, and next to him, **the guiding lights of God's promise to the Jewish people that they would be his chosen ones.**

Did the disciples really understand what happened that moment? Did they recognize the importance of that experience?

It is like the boy in the following:

"A little boy who was blind was taken to, a famous specialist who said that an operation might give him sight. After the delicate operation was over, the little fellow opened his eyes and looked at his mother. But he did not know her, knowing only the sound of her voice and the touch of her hand. But when the mother spoke his name, his little arms went around her neck and he said, *"Mother, is this heaven?"* It was at least a foretaste of heaven. We have heard God's voice in his Word and felt the loving touch of his guiding hand. But when we see him face to face, it will truly be heaven.

Did the disciples know that the TRANSFIGURATION was almost HEAVEN?

Along the way to the cross, we will see whether the disciples really do listen to Jesus. Do the disciples understand in these words of God, that Jesus is the Son of God, and that God the Father really wants the disciples to listen to Him?

If you know anything about scripture, you know that the disciples had a very difficult time listening to Jesus. The human condition of sin gets in the way.

Remember the scripture reading when Peter says to Jesus, *"Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to*

death!" Jesus response is... "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will by no means crow today, before you deny that you know me three times."

And again in John 6 it says: *Then Jesus came to Simon Peter. He said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "You don't know what I am doing now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "Someone who has bathed only needs to have their feet washed, but is completely clean. You are clean, but not all of you."*

And who could forget how well Peter listened to Jesus as he walked on the water, in Matthew 14. It is here that Peter answered him and said, *"Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the waters."* He said, *"Come!" Peter went down from the boat and walked on the waters to come to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was strong, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"* When they got up into the boat, the wind ceased.

God told the disciples on the mountain to Listen to Jesus: and that proved to be very difficult. If the disciples who had Jesus face to face with them had a very difficult time believing what he said, **I would venture to say our task is even more difficult.**

But we do have the Bible, the written stories of Jesus and his sayings,

*-we do have the experience of the church down through the ages which tell of his stories over and over
-we have each other, our own personal experiences of Jesus' actions in our lives to convince us of His love
-and we are blessed by his mercy for us.*

It is like the man and the woman in the following:

Might we all be like the woman in the following story from the late Pastor Valbracht's book, **Exit Interstate O.** "I remember the un-churched husband of a woman in a former parish. He never attended church, but she was always there. She was a quiet, retiring woman, who took part in everything, but always in the background, always silently. Oh, there were many people who had talked to her husband urging church attendance and church membership. One day he finally came and eventually he united with the congregation. Some time later I had the occasion to ask him why? Who said the right thing to him? Who had finally convinced him? *'No one, 'he answered. 'It was my wife. she never said anything, but, I guess, over the years, she kind of lived me into it.'*"

God is telling the disciples to listen to Jesus. God is telling us to Listen to Jesus!! **WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN IF WE REALLY, I MEAN REALLY "LISTEN TO JESUS?"**

Amen