



Potomac Hills

Community Church, PCA

RELEVANT • RELATIONAL • REAL

Rev. David V. Silvernail, Jr.

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The Power to Listen

“Revealed Grace” - a series from Luke
Luke 9:28-36

INTRODUCTION: *Doing Something Dumb*

Have you ever done something that wasn't so terribly bad ... but was sort of dumb? You wished you hadn't said that thing ... or done that thing?

Please, somebody else say they've done something dumb so I'm not the only one.

Not too long ago, I discovered that I was a long way from mastering the online banking procedure. I went online to check my account because, for some unknown reason, the balance in my checkbook bears no relationship **whatsoever** to the balance the bank says I have.

So, I'm trying to sort all this out, and figure, “Hey, it'll be easy to do this online.” No sweat ... just go online, click on online banking, enter my pin number and away we go.

So I did that.

And I got this little message that said “Name or pin number is incorrect. Please try again.”

Now, I'm pretty sure I didn't screw up the name part.

So it must be the pin number.

But now I'm wondering if I put in the right pin number.

It's the same one I use at the ATM machine, which I use often enough that entering has become a habit. I don't even have to think about it.

And here's the problem and why I felt so dumb.

I stopped for a moment and visualized entering the pin number at the ATM.

I'm positive of which buttons I push in what order.

So very slowly I push the buttons on the keyboard in that exact order and sequence. There.

“Name or pin number is incorrect. Please try again.”

Okay, so I try it again.

“Name or pin number is incorrect. Please try again.”

Now I’m confused, and I’m thinking I’ve gotten the numbers mixed up somehow. So I keep trying various combinations ... about seven or eight times ... nothing worked.

“Name or pin number is incorrect. Please try again.”

Finally, I give up and call the bank’s customer support number.

The woman there must have been having a bad day and needed a good excuse to laugh, because she laughed ... several times.

I learned two things. First, after three failed attempts the bank locks that account up for the rest of the day ... no ATM, no online banking, no phone banking. That’s what happened to me. So even if I hit the right pin number, after three tries, it wouldn’t let me in.

Second, I had the pin number right the first time. It didn’t work because I discovered the number keypad on the computer is reversed from the number keypad on the telephone. The telephone keypad goes from 1-9 top down, just like the ATM machine. The computer keypad goes from 1-9 bottom up, like a calculator.

And I’m sure Microsoft had something to do with the fact that the number keypad on computers and calculator don’t match any other known keypad in the free world.

Anyway, the ATM machine matches the telephone keypad, not the computer keypad.

And even though I punched the right buttons in the right sequence, because I was doing it on the computer, and the number keypad is set up differently from the ATM, it didn’t work.

Yes, I felt dumb.

But I learned something.

And after reading today’s passage in Luke 9, I felt I could identify with the Apostle Peter. He did something dumb, but he learned something.

Let’s look at the passage ...

Luke 9:28-36, *“About eight days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John to a mountain to pray. [29] And as He was praying, the appearance of His face changed, and His clothing became dazzling white. [30] Then two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared and began talking with Jesus. [31] **They were glorious to see.** And they were speaking of how He was about to fulfill God's plan by dying in Jerusalem.*

*[32] Peter and the others were very drowsy and had fallen asleep. **Now they***

woke up and saw Jesus' glory and the two men standing with Him. [33] As Moses and Elijah were starting to leave, Peter, not even knowing what he was saying, blurted out, "Master, this is wonderful! We will make three shrines—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." [34] But even as he was saying this, a cloud came over them; and terror gripped them as it covered them.

[35] Then a voice from the cloud said, "This is My Son, My Chosen One. Listen to Him." [36] When the voice died away, Jesus was there alone. They didn't tell anyone what they had seen until long after this happened."

It's been a few weeks, but do remember what was the last thing that happened before this passage?

Jesus had told His disciples that He was going to be crucified and killed, but then He would be resurrected from the dead.

And then He followed up by telling them ...

Luke 9:23b-27, *"If any of you wants to be My follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross daily, and follow Me. [24] If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for Me, you will find true life. [25] And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose or forfeit your own soul in the process? [26] If a person is ashamed of Me and My message, I, the Son of Man, will be ashamed of that person when I return in My glory and in the glory of the Father and the holy angels. [27] And I assure you that some of you standing here right now will not die before you see the Kingdom of God."*¹

Jesus announces that some who have heard Him speak about His suffering won't die until they see Him in His glory.

The "some of you" here are Peter, James, and John.

They are the only three disciples Jesus took with Him into the home of Jairus when He raised his daughter from the dead. And they will be the only three He takes with Him to Gethsemane when He wrestles with His upcoming crucifixion. And He takes these three with Him now up the mountain.

They pick their way through the pathless incline of weather-beaten rock. Up past the sweet-smelling grass of the foothills. Up past the tree line. Up to a quiet place where they can stop and pray.

Once there, the footsore disciples bend over, hands grabbing their knees, and lungs grabbing for air. They lean against some large rocks as sweat runs down their faces onto their shirts.

One by one they start to look around them.

The watercolors of the late afternoon streak the sky, yellow sky gathering at

¹ The opening exposition of this message is adapted from Moments with the Savior by Ken Gire, pages 178-186.

the bottom of the clouds and tinting them orange. To the west lie the sunlit plains of the Promised Land. To the east is the slate blue water of the Mediterranean. To the south is the rich Jordan Valley.

They are halfway to Heaven ... or so it seems.

Thousands of feet above sea level, they are cut off from the world below.

No teeming crowds. No torrents of controversy.

Only clouds and sky and a soft wind blowing on their face.

The climb up the mountain has been long and steep, and as Jesus goes off to pray, the disciples drift off to sleep.

We don't know what Jesus prayed for, but based on what He has just been talking about, I think we can safely surmise a few things.

He may have prayed for strength to descend into this valley of suffering that was ahead of Him. He may have prayed for hope and love to help Him through the dark days ahead. He may have prayed for the disciples, that God would continue to transform them into usable vessels for His work.

We don't know for sure what He prayed for.

What we do know is that God answered Him in overwhelming glory.

Light floods the mountaintop and wakes the disciples.

They look up, rubbing their eyes, and standing before them is this radiant silhouette, as if the flash of lightning had hit earth and stuck.

Blinding in Glory, the face of Jesus shines like the Sun, and light flows from the folds of His garments. We call it the Transfiguration.

The bewildered disciples spring to their feet. "Is this a dream? A vision? A hallucination? What?" They wonder as they shield their eyes from the brightness.

But the light grows more intense and they feel it flow through their bodies. And then they know that this is no dream, no vision, no hallucination. This is real.

Up to now, the tent of Jesus' humanity has concealed His divinity.

But now the flap on that tent is lifted and these three disciples are given a glimpse of His glory.

In the light of that glory all the beautiful things around them have paled. The blue sky, the green grass, the shimmering Mediterranean, the colorful flowers of the Jordan Valley ... all washed out by the light. There is no depth or dimension to anything around them.

Because now they see the Savior in the glory He will have in the Kingdom, and there are no more thoughts about who among them will be the greatest in that Kingdom. Those things have paled in significance as well.

As their eyes adjust, they see Moses and Elijah standing beside Jesus. They stand next to Him as men who have known the wilderness ... who have endured suffering ... and who have experienced rejection by the very people they were

called to save.

And if you think about it, Jesus must have longed to step off the mountain and go back with these kindred spirits to Heaven, to return home to His Father and to the honor and glory that were rightfully His.

He could have been swept from the earth as Elijah had been.

He could have been delivered by a miraculous exodus as Moses had been.

But no chariot comes to whisk Him away.

No miracles come to provide Him a way out of His suffering.

But for now they stand together. The One who is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets stands between the greatest lawgiver and the greatest prophet, being filled, encouraged, and strengthened by them.

Jesus needs all the strength and encouragement they can provide, because His long trek to Jerusalem and the cross is right around the corner. And so for Him, this moment on the mountaintop is a sacrament from Heaven ... a taste of the glory that awaits Him.

But the sacredness of the moment is interrupted by a well-intentioned but clumsy attempt to memorialize the moment.

Peter jumps in with both feet, verse 33, "*Peter, not even knowing what he was saying, blurted out, "Master, this is wonderful! We will make three shrines—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."*

"I can't even imagine how Peter must have felt upon seeing the Savior's transfiguration and subsequently hearing God's voice commanding him and others to listen to Jesus. Immediately upon awakening, Peter witnesses Christ speaking to Moses and Elijah so immediately he draws his own conclusions about the status of Moses and Elijah in relationship to Christ. Whether confused from the rude awakening from his slumber or just trying to put a humanistic point upon what he had just witnessed we don't know, but nevertheless the voice of God corrects Peter's assertions. Perhaps we can be like Peter in that we jump to conclusions and put supernatural events into humanistic vessels. Something like trying to put a hundred pounds of potatoes into a one pound bag. It just doesn't work! We're often so wrapped up in being a human being that we don't allow God to reveal the supernatural to us whether it is through His word or through His providence. We are accustomed to dealing with reality in human terms."²

So once again Peter has gotten in the way ... and once again, he is asked to step aside. God says, "***This is My Son, My Chosen One. Listen to Him.***"

The mountain quakes as an aftershock from these words ... and the disciples are stunned. But the words have a different effect on Jesus. They are comforting

² Quote about Peter adapted from "*Plumb Line*", an email newsletter, 8-16-01.

words, settling words to Him. They were words He needed to hear three years ago when He was baptized, right before He was tempted and tested by Satan. And they are words He needs to hear now, right before He sets out for Jerusalem and the Cross.

But the words aren't just for Jesus.

They're also for the disciples.

You see, the message Jesus has been trying to get them to hear is a crucial one; He must suffer and die, and they must get ready for that reality. He had told them this before He climbed the mountain, but Peter refused to listen. He would tell them again after they left the mountain, and this time they would listen. And understand. And grieve.

For now they lift their eyes and instantly realize the cloud is gone, the light is gone, Moses is gone, Elijah is gone ... it's as it was before. Only Jesus is there. They see only Him. Only His face. Only His eyes.

And **now** they listen.

Years later Peter and John would write about what they saw that day.

Peter would recount this many times. In **2 Peter 1:16-18**, he said, "*For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and His coming again. **We have seen His majestic splendor with our own eyes.** [17] And He received honor and glory from God the Father when God's glorious, majestic voice called down from heaven, "This is My beloved Son; I am fully pleased with Him." [18] We ourselves heard the voice when we were there with Him on the holy mountain.*"

And one day, many years later, John would testify, **John 1:1-5**, "*In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and He was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] He created everything there is. Nothing exists that He didn't make. [4] **Life itself was in Him, and this life gives light to everyone.** [5] **The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.***"

And in **John 1:14**, "*The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. **We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.***" (NIV)

James was the only one of the three who didn't record the event. Maybe he had intended to, but he was the first of the twelve to be martyred, and his life was cut short. Although he didn't write about this intense moment, it surely made an indelible³ impression on Him and most likely sustained Him during His own suffering and death.

³ Indelible: *def.* Cannot be removed, washed away or erased

That day on the mountain the disciples saw Jesus in a way that they had never seen Him before. Before that day, they saw themselves on a fast camel bound for glory. What they didn't see was that the road to glory passed through the tunnel of suffering.

Jesus asked His disciples, then and now, to follow Him through that tunnel, which connected this life to the next. They would have to stoop to enter, and they would have to leave everything behind to squeeze through the narrow opening.

That's where the Transfiguration fits in.

It was, quite literally, the light at the end of the tunnel – a glimpse of His glory on the other side. And the way to that glory is not around suffering, but through it. And joy is found in the journey to that destination, but not on a detour ... not on any detour.

It would be the reward of not only being with Christ but sharing His glory that would give the disciples the strength to crawl through that tunnel. So dazzling was the reward that whatever they had to go through, whatever they had to leave behind, paled in comparison.

But to share Christ's glory means we must first share His suffering.

The cross comes before the crown; the humiliation before the exaltation.

And though Peter often said and did dumb things, he did listen that day on the mountain. Years later he wrote to those who were as confused as he once was regarding the role suffering plays in the process of redemption. He said, **1 Peter 4:12-13**, *"Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. Instead, be very glad—because **these trials will make you partners with Christ in His suffering, and afterward you will have the wonderful joy of sharing His glory when it is displayed to all the world.**"*

That is the message of the Transfiguration – the joy and glory that waits at the end. That is why picking up our cross daily is not a burden. That is why losing our lives for His sake is not a chore.

But we have still have a problem with this.

We don't want reflected glory.

We just want glory.

And that's a big difference, because it forces the question ...

CONCLUSION: *Whose Glory?*⁴

It's like the story of the doctor at a mental institution who was making his rounds one evening when he heard shouting from one of the rooms.

"I am the King of the Universe! I am the Ruler of the World! From now on

⁴ Conclusion is adapted from *Still More Hot Illustrations for Youth Talks* by Wayne Rice as it appeared in "Daily Wisdom" online message, www.dailywisdom.com, 1-15-01 and 11-20-00.

everyone will do what I say because I am the Supreme Commander of the Galaxies!"

The doctor investigated, opening a door to find a man standing on a chair in his underwear, beating his chest, and yelling, "I am the King of the Universe!"

"Harry!" interrupted the doctor over the shouting. "Harry, get down off that chair! And quiet down! You're disrupting people trying to sleep!"

"I am the King of the Universe!"

"Harry, you are **not** the King of the Universe!"

"Yes I am!" he cried all the louder.

"What makes you think you are King of the Universe?" asked the doctor.

"God told me I was King of the Universe!" shouted Harry.

Just then a voice erupted from another room down the hall: "I did not!"

You know the type. They may not be crazy. They may not exactly claim to be God, but they're convinced that God has given them the final word on what's true and not true, what's right and what's wrong. Are they candidates for mental institutions, or simply deluded? Is ego or ambition a factor? Or is it that they're simply admitting aloud what we won't. They want to be God. They want to be like God. They want the glory of God.

We are sane ... so we don't admit it.

But we want it just the same.

In an interview, actor Kevin Bacon shared a conversation he had with his six-year-old son after the son had seen the movie *Footloose* for the first time.

The boy said, "Dad, that was really cool how you jumped up on the roof and swung from the rafters. How did you do that?"

"Well, son, I didn't actually do that part," said Bacon. "A stunt man did."

"What's a stunt man?" asked his son.

"That's someone who dresses like me and does things I can't do. Things that are too dangerous."

"Oh. Well, what about that part in the movie where you spin around on that gym bar and land on your feet," persisted the boy. "How did you do that?"

"Well, son, that was the stunt man again, not me. He's really good at gymnastics."

"Oh." A long pause. "Dad, just what DID you do in the movie?"

Bacon sheepishly replied, "I got all the glory."

Jesus stood in for us so that we could have eternal life and share in God's glory. He was nailed to the cross in our place, to pay for our sins, because he was the only one who could do it and emerge victorious.

Our job is to listen to Him.

It's not a request. It's not a suggestion. It's not merely hearing, but actively

listening to what Jesus says, and then obeying it.

Hebrews 1:1-2a says, *“Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. **But now in these final days, He has spoken to us through his Son.**”*

Given who He is, everything depends on listening to Jesus.

Listen to Him!

This is some of what He said ...

John 14:6, *“Jesus told him, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me.”**”*

John 7:37, *“On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, **“If you are thirsty, come to Me!**”*

Matthew 11:28-30, *“Then Jesus said, **“Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you. Let Me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.”**”*

John 8:12, *“Jesus said to the people, **“I am the light of the world. If you follow Me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”**”*

The only question is whether or not you **listen and follow.**

And those do said, “Amen.”