

February 15, 2026 – Matthew 17:1-9

We have a lot of voices competing for our attention. So many more than I think we even realize. A recent study found that the average American sees between 4,000 and 10,000 advertisements per day. We're not even consciously aware of the vast majority of them. But we'll still see, recognize, and actively consider 75-100 of them every single day.

Scroll social media and roughly 15% of your time is spent looking at sponsored content. Posts that people have paid to put in front of your face. And this doesn't even count the voices in your life that you invite in on a regular basis. Friends, politicians, pundits, and entertainers whose opinions you actively seek out.

Every day we're surrounded by messages telling us what matters, who we are, what truth is, and how we should live. It shouldn't be terribly surprising then that God the Father would look down from heaven and say in no uncertain terms, "Listen to Jesus." Because if we don't make it a priority to listen to him, we're never going to hear him.

Our Gospel reading today places us on a high mountain where Jesus takes Peter, James, and John and reveals His divine glory. Mountains in Scripture are often places where God reveals Himself. Moses ascended Mount Sinai and entered the cloud of God's presence, just as we heard in the reading from Exodus. The mountain trembled, the cloud covered it, and the Lord spoke His Word.

So now, on another mountain, God again reveals Himself, but in a far greater way than before. He doesn't merely speak commandments written on stone. He reveals Himself in the flesh.

Jesus is transfigured before the disciples. His face shines like the sun, and His clothes become dazzling white. Moses and Elijah appear and speak with Him. The Law and the Prophets stand with Christ, showing that everything God has spoken throughout history points to Him. It's a breathtaking moment.

But Peter responds in a way that reveals how easily we misunderstand God's glory. Wanting to preserve the moment, he suggests building three shelters, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Peter's suggestion is sincere, but it misses the point. He places Moses and Elijah alongside Jesus as though they share equal authority.

Before he can dig himself into that hole any deeper, the Father interrupts him. A bright cloud overshadows them, and a voice speaks from heaven: "*This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.*" The Father makes it 100% clear: all of our attention should be on Jesus.

It's something we need to hear over and over again. Listen to Jesus. Because we have so many voices trying to distract us. And I'm not just talking about advertisers and celebrities trying to get us to buy products or support causes. I'm talking about spiritual voices tempting us with sinful things.

One of those voices is the devil. In the Epistle reading, the apostle Peter emphasized that the apostles didn't follow cleverly invented stories but were eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty. He stresses this because Satan's strategy has always been to undermine God's Word.

From the beginning, the serpent tempted humanity by asking, "Did God really say?" If the devil can cause doubt about God's Word, he can redirect faith entirely. He offers substitutes that sound persuasive and appealing but ultimately lead us away from Christ. He wants people to trust in their fear and their doubt and their human wisdom rather than the saving Word of God.

Another competing voice comes from the world. The world constantly promotes ideas about truth, identity, and success that conflict with God's Word. It teaches that truth is flexible, that identity is self-created, and that happiness is the highest goal. It measures success by power, wealth, influence, and personal fulfillment.

Yet the standards of the world constantly change. What is praised today is condemned tomorrow. What God calls holy is often mocked, and what God forbids is celebrated. The world resists Christ because He speaks with divine authority. He calls sin what it is. He exposes human pride. He declares that salvation is found in Him alone. And that message is a threat to every system built on human accomplishment. So the world will always fight against his kingdom.

The most persuasive competing voice, however, is the one closest to us: our sinful flesh. And this voice is so especially dangerous because it comes from within our own thoughts and emotions. It sounds like our own voice and so we blindly accept what our flesh says without question.

Our sinful nature tells us that we know better than God. It convinces us that repentance can wait, that certain sins are harmless, and that our feelings determine truth. The sinful heart constantly places itself above Scripture, treating God's Word as advice rather than authority.

Yet a heart corrupted by sin does not love God. It resists Him. It distorts His Word. It attempts to replace Christ with its own foolishness and selfish desires. The sinful heart is curved in on itself. It can't listen to anyone else, least of all the Word of God.

Because listening to Jesus means more than simply hearing His words. It means being confronted by the depth of our sin and the corruption of our heart. It means seeing that our outward righteousness can't save us and that even our best works are tainted by selfishness. It means exposing our pride and showing us our desperate need for God's mercy. When you listen to Christ, you know without a doubt that you can't possibly save yourself.

Yet Jesus doesn't just speak words of Law. He also speaks the Gospel. He proclaims forgiveness for sinners, mercy for the guilty, and life for those condemned to death. The same Christ who reveals divine glory on the mountain speaks words that lead Him down that mountain toward suffering and crucifixion.

That's the part of His message that the disciples really struggled to understand. Immediately after the Transfiguration, Jesus tells them about His coming death and resurrection. He commands them to keep silent about what they've seen until after He rises from the dead. The glory revealed on the mountain can only be fully understood in light of the cross.

Because the greatest revelation of God's glory is not found in dazzling light but in the suffering and sacrifice of the Son of God for sinners and in the words of salvation that he proclaims. We listen when He declares that He came to give His life as a ransom for many. We listen when He promises that His blood is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. We listen when He proclaims from the cross that His saving work is finished.

The command to listen to Christ continues in the Church today. We hear His voice when Scripture is read and preached. We hear Him when forgiveness is spoken through absolution. We hear Him when He declares His presence in His Body and Blood given for the forgiveness of sins.

Christ still speaks to His people, not from a cloud-covered mountain, but through the means of grace He has established. These means may appear simple and ordinary, but they carry the same divine authority as the voice the disciples heard at the Transfiguration because they deliver Christ Himself.

The Transfiguration stands at the threshold of Lent, just a few days before Ash Wednesday, revealing Christ's divine glory before we follow Him toward His suffering and death. It prepares us to see that the cross is not defeat but victory. Without Christ's Word, the cross appears meaningless and death appears final. But when we listen to Him, we hear that His suffering brings healing and His death conquers death. He promises that those who trust His Word will share in His resurrection and eternal life.

Many voices will continue to compete for our attention. Some will deceive, others will tempt, and still others will flatter our sinful desires. They may sound persuasive and powerful, but they cannot give life.

Above every competing voice stands the command of the Father: "*This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.*" When Christ exposes our sin, we listen. When He proclaims our forgiveness, we listen. When He promises eternal life, we listen. Only His voice carries divine authority. Only His Word reveals the Father perfectly. Only His Gospel leads from death to everlasting life. Amen.