

Matthew 17:1-8
February 26, '17

“GET UP AND ...”

THERE ARE MANY FAMILIAR PHRASES THAT INCLUDE THE WORD “AND” THAT WE CAN EASILY COMPLETE.

FOR EXAMPLE, IF ASKED TO COMPLETE THIS ONE – “*FOUR SCORE AND ...*,” YOU WOULD IMMEDIATELY SAY “*SEVEN YEARS AGO.*”

HERE’S ANOTHER ONE – “*LIFE, LIBERTY, AND...*”

“*...THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.*”

EVEN IN THE BIBLE WE HAVE SUCH STATEMENTS.

“*...BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON AND...*”

“*...THE HOLY SPIRIT.*”

HOW ABOUT THIS ONE – “*SO FAITH, HOPE AND...*”

“*...LOVE ABIDE, THESE THREE.*”

ALL OF THOSE ARE EASY BECAUSE THEY'RE SO FAMILIAR TO US & THE ANSWER SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY POSSIBLE ONE TO GIVE.

THERE IS SUCH A STATEMENT IN THIS PASSAGE WE'VE READ THIS MORNING, THOUGH, FOR WHICH THE ANSWER MIGHT NOT SEEM QUITE AS SIMPLE.

THIS IS THE STORY WE KNOW AS THE TRANSFIGURATION AND THERE IS PERHAPS NO STRANGER STORY THAN THIS IN THE ENTIRE BIBLE.

EVEN THE WORD ITSELF IS STRANGE.

WHEN HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OR USED THE WORD "TRANSFIGURATION" EXCEPT IN REFERRING TO THIS PASSAGE & THIS EVENT?

I THINK THAT, IN ITSELF, TELLS US HOW VERY STRANGE & HOW UNIQUE THIS EVENT IS.

IT VIRTUALLY DEFIES EXPLANATION.

**I THINK THAT MAY BE PART OF THE POINT OF IT.
WE AREN'T CALLED TO EXPLAIN IT OR
UNDERSTAND IT, BUT RATHER TO TRY, AS BEST WE
CAN, TO DETERMINE HOW IT MIGHT SPEAK TO OUR
OWN LIVES.**

**ONE PLACE IN THE STORY THAT WE MIGHT BE
ABLE TO DO THAT IS WITH THE “AND” STATEMENT
THAT IS FOUND HERE IN WORDS THAT JESUS
ADDRESSES TO THOSE WHO ACCOMPANY HIM ON
THAT MOUNTAIN.**

**THEY ARE THE ONLY WORDS SPOKEN BY JESUS
ON THE MOUNTAIN.**

**HE INSTRUCTS THE THREE DISCIPLES – PETER,
JAMES & JOHN – NOT TO BREATHE A WORD OF THIS
UNTIL LATER, BUT THAT INSTRUCTION ISN'T ON THE
MOUNTAIN.**

IT'S AS THEY'RE ON THEIR WAY *DOWN* FROM THE MOUNTAIN.

PETER SPEAKS ON TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN – MAKING HIS BIZARRE SUGGESTION THAT THEY BUILD THREE TENTS OR BOOTHS OR DWELLINGS WHILE THEY'RE UP THERE.

GOD SPEAKS - IN WORDS THAT SOUND VERY MUCH LIKE THE WORDS WE HEARD SPOKEN AT THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

BUT THE ONLY WORDS WE HEAR FROM JESUS ARE WORDS THAT GIVE US ONE OF THOSE CONNECTING “AND” STATEMENTS.

HE SAYS TO THE THREE DISCIPLES, “*GET UP AND...*”

THIS ONE ISN'T AS SIMPLE AS THE PREVIOUS ONES I MENTIONED, IS IT?

**IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE IT RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU,
YOU MIGHT THROW OUT ALL SORTS OF SUGGESTIONS
UNTIL YOU GOT IT RIGHT.**

**THE CORRECT ANSWER, THOUGH, IS REALLY ONE
THAT SHOULDN'T BE THAT DIFFICULT, BECAUSE WE
CAN NARROW IT DOWN BY THINKING OF THE THINGS
THAT JESUS FREQUENTLY SAID.**

**ONE OF THOSE THINGS IS SOMETHING WE'VE
TALKED ABOUT WITH GREAT REGULARITY OVER THE
PAST SEVERAL MONTHS & IT HAPPENS TO BE THE
RIGHT ANSWER IN THIS CASE.**

**MATTHEW SAYS, "...*THEY FELL TO THE GROUND
AND WERE OVERCOME BY FEAR. BUT JESUS CAME AND
TOUCHED THEM, SAYING, 'GET UP AND...DO NOT BE
AFRAID.'"***

HERE IT IS AGAIN.

“DO NOT BE AFRAID.”

WHY WERE THEY AFRAID?

**APPARENTLY, FROM THE CONTEXT OF THE
PASSAGE, IT’S BECAUSE THEY HEARD THE VOICE OF
GOD SPEAKING TO THEM.**

***LISTEN TO IT AGAIN – “...SUDDENLY A BRIGHT
CLOUD OVERSHADOWED THEM, AND FROM THE CLOUD
A VOICE SAID, ‘THIS IS MY SON, THE BELOVED; WITH
HIM I AM WELL-PLEASED; LISTEN TO HIM!’ WHEN THE
DISCIPLES HEARD THIS, THEY FELL TO THE GROUND &
WERE OVERCOME BY FEAR.”***

**THERE ARE A COUPLE THINGS HERE WORTH
MENTIONING.**

**ON THE ONE HAND, WE MIGHT BE INCLINED TO
WONDER WHY THE DISCIPLES WOULD BE SO AFRAID
WHEN THEY HEARD THE VOICE OF GOD.**

I MEAN, HOW GREAT IS THAT!?

YOU'RE HEARING GOD SPEAKING TO YOU!

**AND HE'S TELLING YOU THAT JESUS IS, IN FACT,
HIS SON!**

**BUT, LET'S FACE IT – IF YOU WERE TO HAVE THE
SAME EXPERIENCE – “*SUDDENLY, A BRIGHT CLOUD
OVERSHADOWING YOU & A VOICE FROM THAT CLOUD
SPEAKING TO YOU...*” YOU'D PROBABLY DROP TO
YOUR KNEES IN FEAR, TOO, WOULDN'T YOU?!**

**BUT I THINK PERHAPS THERE'S SOMETHING
MORE THAT WE CAN EXPLORE AS THE SOURCE OF
THE DISCIPLES' FEAR.**

**IT'S CONNECTED TO THE LAST WORDS SPOKEN BY
THAT “VOICE FROM THE CLOUD.”**

“LISTEN TO HIM.”

TO UNDERSTAND WHY THIS MAY HAVE FILLED THE DISCIPLES WITH FEAR, WE HAVE TO GO BACK A CHAPTER & PUT THIS EVENT IN CONTEXT.

AT THE END OF CHAPTER 16 – ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CHAPTERS IN MATTHEW’S ENTIRE GOSPEL – WE HEAR THIS – *“FROM THAT TIME ON, JESUS BEGAN TO SHOW HIS DISCIPLES THAT HE MUST GO TO JERUSALEM AND UNDERGO GREAT SUFFERING AT THE HANDS OF THE ELDERS AND CHIEF PRIESTS, AND SCRIBES, AND BE KILLED, AND ON THE THIRD DAY BE RAISED....THEN JESUS TOLD HIS DISCIPLES, ‘IF ANY WANT TO BECOME MY FOLLOWERS, LET THEM DENY THEMSELVES AND TAKE UP THEIR CROSS AND FOLLOW ME. FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO SAVE THEIR LIFE WILL LOSE IT, AND THOSE WHO LOSE THEIR LIFE FOR MY SAKE WILL FIND IT.’”*

**WHEN THAT “VOICE FROM THE CLOUD” SAYS
“LISTEN TO HIM!,” THESE ARE THE LAST WORDS THE
DISCIPLES HAD HEARD FROM JESUS.**

THEY DON'T WANT TO LISTEN TO THAT!

**THAT'S WHY PETER WANTED TO STAY ON TOP OF
THE MOUNTAIN.**

**THAT'S WHY HE WANTED TO ENTER INTO A
BUILDING CAMPAIGN.**

**LET'S FACE IT – BUILDING TENTS AND BOOTHS
AND DWELLINGS FOR MOSES, ELIJAH & JESUS WOULD
TAKE A WHILE AND THEY COULD JUST STAY WHERE
THEY WERE AND AVOID ALL THAT TALK ABOUT
JERUSALEM AND DYING AND LOSING THEIR LIVES.**

THE SAME IS TRUE FOR US, ISN'T IT?

**WE'D RATHER STAY WHERE WE ARE BECAUSE
IT'S SO MUCH MORE COMFORTABLE.**

**WE'D RATHER STAY IN THE SAFETY & SECURITY
OF WHAT'S KNOWN THAN VENTURE OUT WHERE THE
ROAD MIGHT BE ROCKY & THERE MIGHT BE
PITFALLS AROUND EVERY CORNER.**

**THE FUTURE IS FRIGHTENING WHEN WE DARE TO
VENTURE INTO THE PLACES TO WHICH GOD IS
CALLING US TO GO.**

**I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK ABOUT THE RELEVANCE
OF THIS PASSAGE & THIS MESSAGE ON THE VERY DAY
THAT WE BID FAREWELL TO EMMA SUE AS A STAFF
MEMBER HERE.**

**IT APPLIES TO HER PERSONALLY & IT APPLIES TO
ALL OF US AS WELL.**

**IT WOULD BE SO MUCH EASIER FOR HER TO STAY
HERE & CONTINUE ON AS OUR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
DIRECTOR.**

**IT WOULD BE EASIER FOR *HER* AND CLEARLY SO
MUCH EASIER FOR *US*.**

**IT WOULD BE EASY TO STAY ON THAT MOUNTAIN.
BUT GOD IS SPEAKING – TO *HER* & TO *US*.**

**GOD IS CALLING *HER*, CHALLENGING *HER*,
DARING *HER* TO STEP OUT INTO A NEW FUTURE THAT
HE'S PREPARED FOR *HER*.**

SURE IT'S SCARY BECAUSE IT'S SO UNKNOWN.

**IT'S SCARY FOR *US* AS WELL FOR PRECISELY THE
SAME REASON.**

IT'S SO UNKNOWN.

WHAT WILL *SHE* DO? WHAT WILL *WE* DO?

**FOR THE DISCIPLES, THEY HAD ALREADY BEEN
TOLD THAT THERE WOULD BE DIFFICULT TIMES
AHEAD OF THEM.**

**BUT THEY WERE ALSO TOLD SOMETHING BETTER,
SOMETHING BRIGHTER STOOD BEFORE THEM.**

**MOST IMPORTANTLY, THEY WERE TOLD THAT
THEY WOULDN'T BE ALONE AS THEY VENTURED INTO
THAT FUTURE.**

SO, TOO, FOR EMMA SUE AND SO, TOO, FOR US.

**GOD HAS ALREADY PREPARED FOR US A FUTURE
AND GOD WILL WALK WITH US INTO THAT FUTURE.**

**WHEN I LOOK AT THAT STATEMENT OF JESUS TO
THE DISCIPLES – “GET UP AND...” – THERE’S ANOTHER
THOUGHT THAT COMES TO MY MIND – ANOTHER WAY
OF COMPLETING IT.**

**I HAVE TO PREFACE THIS BY SAYING THAT I HAVE
A TENDENCY TO CONNECT SCRIPTURE PASSAGES &
PREACHING THEMES TO SONG TITLES.**

WHEN I READ SOME PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE, OR THINK OF PARTICULAR PREACHING THEMES, A SONG WILL COME TO MIND.

HERE'S A BIT OF BACKGROUND ON A SONG THAT CAME TO MY MIND WITH THIS STATEMENT OF JESUS TO THE DISCIPLES.

A YOUNG MAN NAMED NICHOLAS SAYS, *“I WENT TO A PARTY & I WAS AT THE BAR AND IT WAS TAKING FOREVER TO GET A DRINK. I WAS FRUSTRATED AND COMPLAINING BECAUSE THERE WAS GREAT MUSIC PLAYING AND I WANTED TO BE OUT THERE. AND THEN MY GIRLFRIEND CAME UP TO ME...”*

AND WITH THAT, A SONG WAS BORN THAT I THINK OF WHEN READING THIS COMMAND OF JESUS TO THE DISCIPLES.

WITHIN THE SONG ARE THESE WORDS:

“DON’T YOU DARE LOOK BACK, JUST KEEP YOUR EYES ON ME...SHE SAID, ‘SHUT UP & DANCE WITH ME.’”

OKAY, SO WE TELL OUR KIDS NOT SAY “SHUT UP!” BUT CAN YOU UNDERSTAND WHY I THINK OF THESE WORDS IN LOOKING AT THIS PASSAGE?

PETER SAYS, “JESUS, WHY DON’T WE DO THIS? WHY DON’T WE PITCH A COLORFUL TENT OVER HERE FOR MOSES. AND THEN WE CAN CONSTRUCT A NICE, SOLID BOOTH OVER ON THIS SIDE FOR ELIJAH. AND WHEN WE FINISH WITH THAT, I’VE GOT IN MIND THIS FABULOUS DWELLING ON THIS CORNER OF THE MOUNTAIN FOR YOU AND...”

AND JESUS INTERRUPTS HIM AND SAYS, “DON’T YOU DARE LOOK BACK – JUST KEEP YOUR EYES ON ME. SHUT UP & DANCE WITH ME.”

“GET UP & DO NOT BE AFRAID!”

**WE'RE ALL THERE ON THAT MOUNTAIN WITH
PETER, JAMES, JOHN & JESUS.**

**WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR
US.**

**WE DON'T KNOW HOW ROCKY THE DAYS AHEAD
MIGHT BE.**

**WE DON'T KNOW WHAT PITFALLS MIGHT STAND
IN OUR WAY.**

**BUT WE DO KNOW THAT WHEN WE DESCEND
FROM WHATEVER MOUNTAIN WE'RE NOW
OCCUPYING, JESUS IS GOING TO GO WITH US.**

**WE CAN'T LOOK BACK TO THE WAY THINGS USED
TO BE.**

**WE CAN'T BE OVERWHELMED BY THE
DIFFICULTIES WE SEE BEFORE US.**

**WE CAN'T WHINE & COMPLAIN ABOUT THE FEARS
THAT THREATEN TO UNDO US.**

**JESUS SAYS TO EVERY ONE OF US, REGARDLESS
OF OUR LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES – *“OH, DON'T YOU DARE
LOOK BACK – JUST KEEP YOUR EYES ON ME.”***

**HE SAYS, *“GET UP & DON'T BE AFRAID. SHUT UP &
DANCE WITH ME.”***

**AS WE LOOK TO THE FUTURE, WHO COULD ASK
FOR A BETTER DANCE PARTNER THAN JESUS? AMEN.**

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