

February 27, 2022

St. Luke 9:28-36:

## **“Catch Points”**

- I. On The Way Up.
- II. As He Is, So We Will Be.
- III. Listen.

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St. Luke 9:28-36

Dear Friends in Christ,

As you noted, this is the Sunday of the Transfiguration of Jesus. As I was thinking about this, the term “catch point” popped into mind. It’s defined as, “...railway points designed to derail a train running back in the wrong direction to prevent collision with a following train.” (Collins English Dictionary - Complete and Unabridged, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition 2014).

The words that stand out are, “running back in the wrong direction.” I suspect we’ve had such moments; headed for some sort of collision with our thinking and doing. There’s good reason why the Holy Spirit had John write, “Do not love the world or the things of the world.” (1 Jn. 2:15). Some of you know that the word he used for love is “agape.” It’s the love that will sacrifice whatever it takes for someone or something, good or bad. It’s also the love that suffered, bled and died on a Roman cross for us. The supreme tragedy for us would be to agape this world only to collide with unending, unchanging weeping and grinding of teeth!

We’re on the mountain to experience. . .

## CATCH POINTS

### I. On The Way Up.

“Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” (v.28).

Luke’s reference to “these sayings” leads to the question, “What sayings?” Well, the journey up the high mountain was after Jesus had informed them, “The Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” (v.22). They didn’t hear the “be raised” part. After that He said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (v.23). The “anyone” most definitely includes everyone here. After that He said, “For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” (v.24) And then this icy truth: “For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?” (v.25).

Here’s **the first catch point** we are to take with us on the way up the mountain, these words we just heard: “For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?” It’s what would happen if confronted by that moment when Jesus says, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.” (Mt. 7:23). Does that not derail our running in the wrong direction if it’s non-stop running after anything and everything of this world? When excuses move us to a fading faith and lack of growth in the Word? You see, lasting life isn’t here! There is no profit!

Listen, we’re told, “...he went up on the mountain to pray.” The disciples went to a high place with the Lord. What a blessing to be part of such a gathering. But, let’s face it, getting up a mountain can be strenuous. We want things soft and easy, but it doesn’t work that way; not in this world and not when Jesus says, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

In the Epistle to the Galatians, the Holy Spirit had Paul write, “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. For these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.” (Gal. 5:17). Paul goes on to write, “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that he also will reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” (Gal. 6:7,8).

There really isn’t anything difficult to understand about this catch point. It derails our fleshy

thinking and doing, our wants and the direction they will take us: Eternal separation from God.

## II. As He Is, So We Will Be.

And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him (vv.29-32).

Again, "...the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white." He was transfigured, changed. Matthew reports, "...his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light." (Mt.17:2). They saw what the Psalmist described, what we will see: "O Lord my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent." (Ps.102:1,2).

Present were Moses and Elijah in their glorified bodies. It was Moses, who many centuries earlier prophesied, "The Lord your God will raise up a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers - it is to him you shall listen. (Dt. 18:15). It was Elijah who, as reported in 2 Kings, "...went up by a whirlwind into heaven." (2 Ki. 2:11).

This glorious moment pointed to the fact that Moses, who was given the Law, foreshadowed Jesus who would fulfill the Law for us. It pointed to the fact that Moses leading God's people from bondage in Egypt to The Promised Land foreshadowed Jesus leading God's people from bondage to eternal death to the Eternal Promised Land. The presence of Elijah pointed to the fact that Elijah being bodily taken into heaven foreshadowed that on the day of Christ's Second Coming, our resurrected bodies will be instantly taken into heaven.

I would pray that we hold tightly to these words the Holy Spirit gave to the Apostle John and, therefore, to us:

See what kind of love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (1 Jn.3:1-3).

Dear friends, if this is not a **catch point**, a derailment of everything that pushes us in the wrong direction then what is? As He is, so we will be!

## III. Listen.

And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah" -not knowing what he said. As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they saw. (vv.32-36).

And so, **the third catch point: Listen to Him.** Listen. The Word, who became flesh, speaks. He spoke when He walked this earth. He speaks to us in the written and spoken Word He has given us. He speaks to us in our Baptisms and His Supper; guides, strengthens, comforts, assures, forgives our sin and points us to eternal life.

Think of it, of the billions of people in this world, those who know Christ can listen to and

understand the power of God's Word. How sad when we eagerly listen to the many voices that gossip, slander, demean and destroy character, deceive and twist God's Word. We would do well to measure everything according to God's Word and to remember this Scripture: "...for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." (2 Cor.11:14). I do appreciate this insight made years ago by Vance Havner:

The early Christians did not transform the world, they transcended it. It was in later years, when (the Roman emperor) Constantine made a Christian profession easy and the church ceased looking for the Lord to return and began trying to build heaven on earth, that Christians became 'reasonable' and the world could live comfortably with them. But let it not be forgotten that a twice-born, Spirit-filled Christian is always a contradiction to this old world.

Catch points. The Scriptures are filled with them. They are there to keep us from running back in the wrong direction; a direction that would bring us to a collision with eternal death. They are there to impress these words on us: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come." (2 Cor.5:17). When you get down to it, the catch points are the love of God in Jesus for you and me! This is what we experience on the mountain.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott