

No More Keeping Quiet!

Text: 2nd Kings 2:1-12, 2nd Corinthians 10:13-18, Mark 9:2-9

Dear Brothers and Sisters in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

Anyone who has ever been on a long road trip in a car with children is very familiar with a unique and essential road game called “The Quiet Game.” For those unaware, this game might be the most effective ploy to get a little break from the loud yapping from the back seat. The rules are simple: whoever can stay quiet for the longest wins the game! Of course, “The Quiet Game” comes with its risks. You might end up getting irritated when a child won’t talk at all when you need to address them, or a child might purposefully lose to get their siblings or friends to speak with even more talking and loud noises. Regardless, this game still has its perks for parents, and I remember it being entertaining as a kid. Like many of you with siblings, I enjoyed those silent moments when I could get them.

While reading the texts for the sermon today, it occurred to me that in these accounts, we see two instances of “The Quiet Game,” so to speak. Both in the account of Elijah being taken to Heaven and in the transfiguration of our Lord. On one hand, we have Elisha being confronted by two groups of sons of the prophets in two different instances, asking him whether or not the Lord had revealed to them that Elijah was going to be taken into heaven. He responded, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.” On the other hand, we have a command from Jesus directed to Peter, James, and John “to tell no one” of the transfiguration “until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.” Though the motivations behind these two instances are separate, and they certainly weren’t playing a game when asked to be quiet, the message remains the same between the two: a miracle was going to be or had been revealed to them, but the time to speak on it had not yet come.

I. “Keep Quiet”

In Elisha’s case, he was like a parent trying to keep his children silent in the car’s back seat. Here, it can be deduced that the Lord had revealed to Elijah, Elisha, and the prophets of Israel that Elijah, in accordance with God’s will, was going to be taken up to Heaven. In the Keil-Delitzsch *Commentary On The Old Testament*, it says, “The Lord had revealed to both that the seal of divine attestation was to be impressed upon the work of Elijah by his miraculously being taken up into heaven, to strengthen the faith not of Elisha only, but also of the disciples of the prophets and all of the godly in Israel;”

Imagine knowing that someone you loved dearly was going to pass away. Take that a step further and imagine knowing that as you walk and talk with them, you are heading to the moment when you know for sure that they will pass away. Though Elijah would not die, Elisha’s beloved mentor and teacher was about to be taken into Heaven. Elijah was about to be taken away from these people who had come to adore him, built friendships with him, and had seen him as a mighty prophet. By the Lord working through him, Elijah was the reason the people of Israel turned from the evil of their ways and encouraged them to leave their Baal worship behind

and return to the Lord. The respect for Elijah was great. So much so that his servant Elisha, despite the requests from Elijah, would not leave his side as these things were about to take place. And so, this silence was not a request from Elisha of rudeness but a request of reverence. This was a moment that required silence as a miracle of God was about to take place that we can surmise was not something anyone could truly be prepared for without the help of God.

As recorded in the account, it follows that "...as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces." The tearing of clothes expresses great grief that occurs many times in scripture. In tearing his garments, Elisha expresses grief at the separation from Elijah, which even further expresses the required reverence given the situation.

II. "Tell No One"

This leads us to a more "lighthearted" but intense scenario we read a moment ago. For Peter, James, and John, at the transfiguration of Christ, they had witnessed something few have seen. They laid eyes on the glory of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, whose fullness will be revealed to us upon His return. As was the case for Elisha and the sons of the prophets, they had seen something so absolutely and undeniably miraculous that it required utter reverence. And along with Elisha, the disciples here could not fully understand what was occurring. They knew it served the will of the Lord, but as evident from the text, they were terrified.

It follows that they were asked to "tell no one" what they had seen after Christ's glory had been revealed to them. However, they were asked to keep silent for a much different purpose than Elisha was asking the sons of the prophets to keep quiet. The time for the revelation of Christ and His ministry on earth had not yet come. Why would Jesus be so adamant about protecting His identity when His whole ministry is centered on belief in Him?

Even though Jesus was clearly identified as the Son of God among His disciples before His ministry formally began, the time had not yet come for His identity to be revealed to the world. Had His identity been made apparent to the people, this would have likely infringed on Christ's work that He was given by His Father in Heaven to do before He would go to the cross to pay the ultimate price for our sins. The disciples themselves had much misunderstanding regarding the Messiah. As was the case among many, the expectation for the Messiah was that of a worldly king, not a king that would come to be a servant of all! And so, reverent silence was required of the disciples over what they had witnessed until the ultimate goal of Christ's ministry was accomplished so that there would be no misunderstanding regarding Christ's purpose here on earth spreading about. In his commentary on Mark, R.C.H. Lenski wrote,

"If the story of the transfiguration had been spread abroad, these wrong, fleshly expectations would have been fanned into flames and would have caused a great deal of harm. The lips of the chosen disciples were sealed regarding this revelation for the very same reason that Jesus so constantly avoided the title 'Messiah,' which had been associated with fanciful and extravagant political ideas of worldly grandeur."

III. “Boast In The Lord”

Among these different instances of requested silence, the similarity still stands that a miracle was going to be or had been revealed to them, but the time to speak on it had not yet come. But for Christians, the time to speak of Christ’s work for us has come. By faith in Christ, we are witnesses to all that Christ has done for us in His death and resurrection and His earthly ministry. We share in the witness of Peter, James, and John and in the testimony from the Father that Christ indeed is “His beloved Son.” We have seen His glory by faith both in the account of the transfiguration recorded for us in Holy Scripture and at the cross and empty tomb where, in His state of humiliation, He took upon Himself all of our transgressions. Therefore, we do not keep silent! We boast in the Lord! As our Epistle lesson teaches, “‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’ For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.”

To commend ourselves results in death. When we are honest with ourselves and only look inwardly and outwardly at the things we have done and the sins we have committed, the accusations of the devil are true. Without Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, we are indeed poor, helpless, and outright sinful human beings with no desire to do right in God’s sight. We are traitors against Him of the highest degree. If asked to keep silent, without Christ, we would not. There is no reverence of our own toward Him, and we certainly do not take His commands as seriously as we ought to. We truly and honestly deserve eternal punishment for our transgressions against our master and creator.

But to commend God, that is, to boast in the Lord, gives the credit where credit is due. To boast in Him is to give the glory, praise, and honor due to His name for His direction in our lives that pushes back the devil’s accusations. Our self-seeking and self-gratifying nature is overturned by the love found in Christ alone. This is why we boast. This is why we tell of the Good News of our salvation found in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is why we share the witness that has been handed down to us by the Holy Spirit.

IV. No More Keeping Quiet!

In the transfiguration of Christ, we see glory beyond all comprehension. We see a glimpse of the full glory that is to come on the final day when our Lord returns to judge the living and dead. On that day, the veil over His glory will be lifted, and that glory will be our glory. Though impossible to comprehend, it is already our glory by faith. We, as believers, are already in the kingdom, but we do not yet see it in its glory. As Hebrews 2:8-9 states, “At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to Him. But we see Him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.” Until the full manifestation of the glory of Christ on the last day, our faith is preserved in the means of grace. In the written and spoken word, we are constantly reminded of this work of Christ that overturned sin, death, and the devil. In our Baptism, we are assured that our sins are indeed forgiven and that we have been washed clean by Christ’s death and resurrection for the sins of the world. Because of that baptism, we will be inheritors of the eternal kingdom and not left to

rot in our sins. In the Lord's Supper, we are further preserved and strengthened in our faith with the visible assurance of the forgiveness of our sins in the true presence of the body and blood of Christ. All these gifts and more have been given to us in the glory of the death and resurrection of Christ at the lowly cross that was pointed to at the transfiguration.

With all of these gracious, undeserved, and astonishing gifts given to us, we have to seriously evaluate how we treat them. Since playing "The Quiet Game" in this life is much more comfortable, we are all guilty of becoming complacent with our salvation won in Christ. Complacency is not what we are bid to be stuck in as Christians. Contentment is, but complacency is not. God does not ask us to keep silent regarding the things that we have witnessed and have been given by faith. Instead, as Psalm 105:1 states, we are asked to "give thanks to the Lord; call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples!" The moment called for reverent silence for Elisha, the prophets, and the disciples. But in this moment, to be silent regarding our forgiveness is to be ignorant of that forgiveness in the first place. As we consider the glory at the transfiguration, the glory at the cross, and the glory that is to come, let us be ever diligent in telling of that glory that is ours by faith in the forgiveness of sins so that those who do not know of Christ now, may on the last day see this glory not in fear of eternal judgment, but in joy of eternal bliss. No more keeping quiet!

Amen.