

Stop, Look, Listen

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[0 : 00] Amen. Well, I trust we'll be able to continue in our worship as we look at this marvellous passage together. Can I just add to Tim's welcome to all of you. It's great to be here today and to be able to seek to understand what God is saying to us.

Can I thank all of you who have been praying for me? Some of you remember the last time I stood here, it didn't go quite so well because I'd forgotten I was speaking. Graham sent me a text last night to say, everything okay for tomorrow, Paul?

And I could not resist but reply by saying, Graham, what's happening tomorrow? So we do like Graham's prayer life to be enhanced a little bit. But I did put him out of his misery after just a minute or two. I felt that was a little bit too cruel.

I'm not too sure where to start because this morning has been such an insight into the stuff that's going on in some of your minds already. Everything from chewing gum to bakeries. And, you know, it's just fascinating.

The fact that we all come here in kind of very different places. But if I could try and summarize today's message in just three words. Do you think we can manage three words?

[1 : 04] Really try and keep them in our heads for today. It's the three words that are on the screen there. Three words. Stop. Look. Listen. Very familiar words from children onwards.

But as we approach this passage of the transfiguration, these are the three words that I want to encourage us all to have in our minds. Stop. Look. Listen. Isn't it the case that it seems as though all of us are incredibly busy a lot of the time and as a result are often just seem to be living life at such a rapid pace?

Already I've asked one or two of you how you are today. And the answer has been busy or tired. Those seem to be two of the familiar responses, don't they?

And what is it about our life where everything seems to be kind of speeding up somehow or other? Even I did a little speed test on my Wi-Fi at home. I've got no idea what the numbers mean.

But all I know is a year or two ago it was one. And now it's 50. Now I know Phil at the back will be able to explain exactly what that is. But somehow or other in the course of a year or two it's 50 times faster than it was.

[2 : 20] And it's all just going at such a pace. It's almost like email is now a little bit too slow because you have to press a couple of buttons or sort of log in to get it. So we use more instant forms of communication like WhatsApp.

So it's just there. And we can do it all really quickly. We can pay for things more quickly than ever. This is my chance to show off my watch which I can simply flash. And there I go, I've paid.

I hardly need to even think about it. I can just go on to buy even the next thing. And it's so different to the days where, do you remember standing in the line? And you sort of thought, oh no, somebody's about to bring out a cheque.

And you were just getting ready for that long. Some of you are too young to even remember. Have you all heard of cheques? It was a way in which you used to be able to pay and you had to write something out. And if you were in a queue in the supermarket it would take about five minutes for the person to actually write out their cheques.

I know that for myself as I go back to work tomorrow I'm getting ready to squeeze in about a dozen meetings in the course of the day. And I feel for those of you with only 12 minute long appointments to see your patients.

[3 : 20] Or those of you who have to bill for every six minutes of your time. No wonder that for many of us the answer that we give when we're asked how we are is either busy or tired.

And yeah, there's a risk, isn't it? Isn't it? That in our life there can be a relentlessness about it all.

And even in our church services there's a risk that we kind of rush in, that we are stimulated with lots of things going on. And we sort of rush out and rush back into the rest of life and all that awaits us today.

And some of you are probably already thinking about all that you need to pack in between a quarter to one and the time you go to bed. And the invitation that I think we have today from Jesus himself as we look at the transfiguration is that actually at times what we need to do and what he invites us to do is stop.

We need to take a bit of time out and we need to reflect more deeply on all that's going on. But not just that, we need to have a really good look.

[4 : 37] We need to have a really good look at Jesus and who he is. Because I wonder as I look around and as I look into my own heart whether in all of this hurrying and scurrying and relentlessness and restlessness at times we've lost sight of who Jesus really is.

And we're not necessarily acknowledging it to ourselves but if we stop and pause have we lost sight of who he is? I speak particularly to those who have been followers of Jesus perhaps for many years, perhaps for a lifetime.

Have we lost sight of who he really is? And how are we getting on at the whole business of listening to what he has to say to us?

Stop. Look. Listen. Now how am I getting all of that from this passage? Well let's try and understand a little bit about the passage. It's useful if you can have your Bibles open or indeed on your phone or whatever as we try and get stuck into this passage in Luke chapter 9.

And let me try and explain why I think there's this invitation at the very start of it to stop. If you were here last week we looked at some really challenging verses in Luke chapter 9 down to verse 27 where Jesus had been giving some really tough teaching.

[5 : 56] He'd been making it clear to his disciples and followers that he was going to be heading to his death. And he had just been talking to them about how costly it was going to be to follow him as Luke was bringing to us.

And then he says to his three disciples, Peter, James and John, Do you know what? We're going to go on a long, long walk. Matthew says it wasn't just a small hill that they were climbing up.

It was a high mountain that they were climbing up. And in the middle of all of that scurrying and busyness, they went on a long mountain climb.

And you notice, and I had never noticed this before until I got stuck into this passage. I just thought, in my own mind, transfiguration, short walk up small hill, marvellous thing happens, walk downhill.

But that's, yeah, if you've got that in your head at some point, that's probably what was going on. Actually, that wasn't what happens. Because if you look at verse 37, it says, The next day when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.

[7 : 01] So I don't think it's stretching it to conclude that the long walk up the mountain was then followed by a long time at the top of the mountain. And probably a sleepover. And then they walked down the next day.

So in the middle of this passage, where we've had a really busy time, Jesus takes this full day and a bit with his three disciples on this mountain.

And notice what happens at the end of it when he comes back down the mountain at verse 37. When he comes back down, he comes to a scene of complete chaos.

There's a large crowd just waiting for him. There's a man in absolute despair. There's evidence of demonic activity.

There's a young boy who's being thrown into convulsions. And there's disciples feeling hopeless and powerless and completely out of control. But sandwiched in the middle of all of this busyness and frenetic activity is this period where Jesus and his three disciples are able to stop.

[8 : 09] And let's just picture the scene. As Jesus says to them, we're going to go on a prayer walk.

Ian reminded us when he preached last week that we need to watch out for what happens when Jesus says he's going to pray. Do you remember that one?

I wonder how much that teaching has challenged you and challenged me to be people who recognize our need of prayer. I've been struck by the fact that it seems in some ways that Jesus felt the need or had the desire to be praying more than I have.

What's going on there if some of us feel that we can live our lives in all that frenetic activity? In a sense of prayerlessness.

When we look at the example of Jesus and see his determination. Despite all the things that needed his attention. Despite all the people who needed his attention.

[9 : 17] To take time out. To go the long walk. And to take the full day and potentially the night in prayer. So there they are.

Praying. Walking. Heading up that mountain. And what was going to happen as they headed up? Well I had the opportunity to get away this week with my family.

And somewhat unusually we decided to try to walk up. I'm going to call it a mountain. Some might decide to challenge it and describe it as a small hill. But I don't have any pictures as evidence.

So we will describe it as a mountain. We have a dog now. And this is being used as a great excuse to subject our young children to increasing levels of walking. Because we remind them that they wanted the dog. And dogs mean walking.

But the great thing about the walk up the mountain was of course every twist and turn. We thought we were nearly at the top. But then another twist and turn came. You know what it's like. Those of you who have tried recently to walk up a mountain.

[10 : 18] But the great thing when we actually got to the top. Was the way in which our perspective totally changed. For us that mountain was next to.

Was on the shores of Loch Fyne. And where we'd only been able to see a little bit of the loch as we drove along. By getting up to the top. Suddenly the view changed. Our entire perspective changed.

And we were able to look right down the magnificence of the entirety it seemed of Loch Fyne. Right out to sea. And it was all worth it.

We'd stopped. We'd gone that walk. And we were able to get an entirely different view. But what we saw that day this week.

Paled into complete insignificance. Compared to what Peter, James and John saw. As they completed their mountain climb.

[11 : 15] They have the experience of looking at Jesus. And this time. Seeing him for who he really is. Now I love the fact that their vision of Jesus.

Their experience of the transfiguration. Didn't actually depend on them being really, really brilliant followers of Jesus. Because you notice there. They're actually in Luke it tells us they were sleepy.

Right. They were weak and they were frail. And they were about to pretty much miss the whole thing. But despite that. This wasn't about them. This was actually about Jesus. And so as they get to that.

As they get to the top of the mountain. We read in verse 29. That as he was praying. The appearance of his face changed. And his clothes became as bright.

As a flash of lightning. The incredible reality. Of who Jesus really is. Is seen clearly. By all those of them at the top of the mountain.

[12 : 14] It's as though a veil is removed. And the glory of Jesus. Is seen for what it really is. He who had made himself nothing. He who took on the nature of a servant.

Who was made in human likeness. Is for a short period of time. Seen for who he really is. The apostle John. Years later.

Would have a vision. Of what Jesus would be like. In the book of Revelation. As he looks at the events. That will lead to the wrapping up. Of this world. And the ushering in.

Of eternity. And as John gets a vision of Jesus. In the book of Revelation. I wonder whether John. Reflects. On some of the similarities. Between what was seen.

On that mountain. And what Jesus. Is going to be like. As he will be seen. By all of us. One day. And so.

[13 : 12] In Revelation chapter 1. If you want to. Flick over to it. In Revelation chapter 1. We read in verse 12. John saying. I turned round. To see the voice.

That was speaking to me. And when I turned. I saw seven golden lampstands. And among the lampstands. Was someone like a son of man. Dressed in a robe. Reaching down to his feet. And with a golden sash.

Around his chest. The hair on his head. Was white like wool. As white as snow. And his eyes. Were like blazing fire. His feet. Were like bronze. Glowing in a furnace.

And his voice. Was like the sound. Of rushing waters. In his right hand. He held seven stars. And coming out of his mouth. Was a sharp double-edged sword. His face. Was like the sun.

Shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him. I fell at his feet. As though. Dead. Moses. Moses. And Elijah.

[14 : 07] Appear. Alongside. Jesus. And they are described. In verse 30. As appearing. In glorious. Splendor. Talking. With Jesus.

And then. And talking about. His departure. And then in verse 32. We read. That Peter. And his companions. When they had woken up. Saw. His. Glory.

Peter then. True to form. In that. Wonderful. Kind of. Impetuous. Way. That we see. So much of. Blurts out. The first thing. That seems to come into his.

Mind. He's. He's captivated. By the vision. Of what he sees. And he immediately suggests. The starting. Of a small construction project. That he. Should build. Three shelters.

For Jesus. For Moses. And for Elijah. I don't know where he was going to get the material. For it all. But his enthusiasm. Was there. But even. As he is speaking. He becomes terrified.

[15 : 01] As a cloud. Descends. And envelops him. And the other disciples. And indeed Jesus. And then they hear. In verse 35. These wonderful.

Words. The voice. Of God himself. Saying. This is my son. Whom. I have chosen. Listen to him. And once the voice is spoken.

They find that Jesus. Is. Alone. They've stopped. And this is their chance. To look. At Jesus. I think there's at least.

Four things. That they. Would have. Seen. And four things. That I hope. We can see. As we take a really good look. At Jesus. This morning. One.

Jesus. Is God's. Glorious. Son. This. Was confirmed. Here. In verse. 35. By God. Himself. Yes.

[16 : 00] His glory. When here. On earth. Was sometimes. Veiled. Yes. He remains. Often. Unseen. And misunderstood. But this passage. Tells us.

That he is. Holy. Pure. And glorious. Peter. Reflecting. On what he saw. In. Second. Peter. Chapter. One. Verse.

16. Says this. We didn't follow. Cleverly devised stories. When we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In power. But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

He received honor. And glory. From God the Father. When the voice came to him. From the majestic glory. Saying. This is my son. Whom I love. With him. I am well pleased.

We ourselves heard. This voice. That came from heaven. When we were with him. On the sacred mountain. God's. Glorious. Son.

[16 : 54] Do we see Jesus. As glorious. This morning. Second. He's the central character. In all. Of history. Moses.

And Elijah. Were there. As representatives. Of the giver of the law. And representatives. Of the prophets. That had simply pointed the way. Towards. Jesus.

And you'll notice. That it wasn't long. Before. They. Vanished. And as we've already looked. One day. Ultimately. When this earth. Is wrapped up. He will be the one.

Before whom. Every knee. Bows. And I think there's just. An opportunity. To glimpse. Jesus. In his glory. Of transfiguration. As the central.

Character. In all. Of history. Thirdly. And linked. To this. Jesus. Jesus. Stands. Ultimately. Alone. And utterly. Unique.

[17 : 50] Moses. And Elijah. Were there. Speaking. With him. But as that cloud. Descends. They disappear. And Peter. Realizes. He cannot put up.

Three shelters. Because. There is no way. In which he can see. Jesus. As in any way. On a par. Or standing. Alongside. Moses. And Elijah. Jesus. Is utterly.

Unique. Verse 36. They found. That Jesus. Was. Alone. I think. We. Can. Have. A trust.

Really. Respectful. Dialogue. With our friends. Who. Pursue. Other. Religions. And we may. Find. That we have got. Lots. In common. I'm sure.

That we. Will. Potentially. Around. Our. Values. Around. Lifestyle. Choices. But when it comes to a discussion. About different prophets.

- [18 : 44] Let's be clear. As Christians. That respectfully. We must be clear. That Jesus does not simply stand. Alongside. A range of other great prophets.
- We see. In the transfiguration. That others. Disappear. And Jesus stands. Supreme. In his glory. As the only one.
- Who is God's son. And finally. And it's just there. If we look.
- At it carefully. We see him. One. As God's glorious son. Two. As the central character. Of all. Of history. Three. As the one. Who stands.
- Alone. And utterly unique. But four. As the one. Who stands. Ready. To be. Our savior. We see here.
- [19 : 39] Verse 31. Moses and Elijah. Spoke about his departure. Which he was about to bring to fulfillment. At Jerusalem. His death.
- Wasn't going to be an accident. He'd already spoken before this incident. About the fact that he knew he was heading to die. And here in his transfiguration.
- He's speaking to Moses and Elijah. About his departure. Which he was about to bring to fulfillment. Isn't it incredibly deliberate? Isn't it absolutely clear?
- That this is not Jesus. Who is going to be caught by surprise. This is Jesus. The supreme commander. Over everything that's going on. The one who is about to choose.
- To bring his departure. To fulfillment. In order that he can die. In order that he can be. The sacrifice for our sins. In order that he can pay the price for sin.
- [20 : 35] In order that he can bring us forgiveness. In order that we can stand today. Not looking at him only. As the glorious awesome God. But also looking at him as Savior.
- Now we don't have the opportunity. To physically see Jesus. In the same way. That Peter, James and John. Saw him that day. But marvelously. We are invited.
- To look this morning. To turn our faces this morning on Jesus. Using our faith. Using our heart. Using our minds. Using all that we have.
- And we're invited. To contemplate. His glory. I'm not just making this up. If you're questioning it. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 3.
- And verse 17. And let's see. What it has to say to us here. Marvelous words here. 2 Corinthians 3. Verse 16.
- [21 : 35] Says. Whenever anyone turns to the Lord. The veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the spirit. And where the spirit of the Lord is. There is freedom. And we all.
- Who with unveiled faces. Contemplate the Lord's glory. Are being transformed into his image. With ever increasing glory.
- Which comes from the Lord. Who is the spirit. And so the encouragement that I take from that is. Firstly. Let's take the time. To take a really good look.
- At Jesus. Let's contemplate. His glory. And the marvelous promise. In these verses. Is that as we contemplate. His glory.
- We are changed. We cannot look. And truly contemplate. His glory. And go away. Unchanged.
- [22 : 32] Now as I was preparing this. In the course of the week. I had some music on. In the background. It's always been my way of studying. The more studying I have to do. The louder the music has to become. And I suddenly was tuning into some words.
- That were being sung. And discovered. That as I was preparing this. I was listening to a song. Called. Transfiguration. Transfiguration. And the words. Included. This. Holy is the Lord.

Revealed. Before my eyes. As I behold your beauty. With unworthy eyes. The only song my soul can find to sing.

Is hallelujah my king. I don't have much more to say. I do want to say another few things. But can we pause for just three minutes. And just listen to that song. And I hope that we might have the opportunity.

Of contemplating the glory. Of our Lord Jesus. We'll face many challenges. In our own lives. And we'll face many challenges.

[23 : 28] As a church. But I think it's absolutely the case. That if we are people. Who will ensure. That we keep our eyes. Fixed firmly on Jesus.

On his glory. On who he really is. As the one who is uniquely. Our saviour. Then we will find. We have the strength.

And endurance. To deal with every single one. Of these challenges. That will come our way. Let's ensure that we never. Just simply think we're coming. And going through the motions.

And just singing a song or two. Thank you to the band. Who work hard. And who practice in order. That they might help lead us. Into worship. In order that we might.

Simply have that. Fresh glimpse. Every time we are here. Of the glory. And beauty. Of Jesus. Can we take some time.

[24 : 25] This week. To stop. And to have a really good look. At who he is. And finally. As we look at him.

God made it clear. In verse 35. That he is the one. Whom we must. Listen. To. What does it mean.

I wonder. This morning. For us to listen. Intently. To what Jesus. Has to say. To us. Even in this chapter.

That we've been looking at. In Luke chapter 9. He has had so much. To say to us. About what it actually means. To be his follower. And my challenge.

As we think about. What it means. To listen to Jesus. Is that we look again. At this passage. And all that's coming. And we think about. What it is. Jesus challenges us.

[25 : 20] To do. To be. What he says. About our thoughts. About our attitudes. About our behaviour. Will we listen. And seek out his will.

For our life. As I say. Not just in terms. Of our actions. But also. In terms. Of our attitudes. And in terms. Of every choice. That we make.

Parents. As one. I am challenged. About the extent. To which. We will help. Our children. Really. Listen. To Jesus. What can we do.

To help them. Ensure. That they really know. What Jesus. Has. For them. What he has. In store. For them. How he. Would want them. To live.

And Jesus himself. In John 10. Said. Of his followers. My sheep. Listen. To my voice. I know them. And they follow.

[26 : 17] Me. And I think. There's a lifelong. Pursuit. About this. I know that. As I could look. To some of you. Who are among. Our most mature. Christians here. You would agree.

That stopping. Looking. And listening. To Jesus. Is not something. That's just for. Those at a certain age. But is actually. A daily. Challenge.

A daily. Pursuit. For all of us. And I'm encouraged. In this. To finish off. By. Thinking a little bit. About the last. Words. That Peter. Who witnessed.

All of this. Had to say. To. Or is recorded. As having said. Having said. To us. His very. Final words. Second Peter.

Chapter three. And verse 18. He said. Earlier in that letter. That he knows. His death. Is coming near. And here's. What he has to say. And with this.

[27 : 11] He signs off. He says. Grow. In the grace. And knowledge. Of our Lord. And Savior. Jesus Christ. To him.

Be glory. Both now. And forever. Amen. Grow. In the grace. And knowledge. Of our Lord. And Savior. Jesus Christ. To him. Be glory. Both now.

And forever. Amen. I've enjoyed. Just reflecting. On the verse. Because there's something in it. That captures. Both. What's going on. In our hearts. And what needs to go on. In our minds. And our heads. Isn't there? In the same way.

As we. Need to both. Look at Jesus. And also. Listen. To what he has to say. Peter could say. It's not one. Or other. It's not just about our feelings about Jesus.

Nor is it just about intellectual thoughts and knowledge about him. No, no. He. At the end of his journey. Perhaps reflecting back on his life of following Jesus. Including that experience of transfiguration.

[28 : 08] Of seeing Jesus' transfiguration. At the very end. To those who are following Jesus. Says this. Stop. Look. And listen.

Grow. In the grace and knowledge. Of our Lord and Saviour. Jesus Christ. May that be our experience. Today. Let's pray. Lord Jesus.

We worship you. As the one who. Reveals to us something of your greatness and glory today.

As we've looked at this passage. And we just bow before you.

Lord Jesus. And. With our hearts. Bowed before you. And with that image. Perhaps something of that image. Of what you are like that day.

[29 : 01] And perhaps something of the image. Of what you. Will be like. When we see you. In your glory. We bow before you. And we say. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus.

For being our Saviour. Thank you Jesus. For being our Lord. Jesus. Would you occupy. The highest place. In our hearts. And in our minds.

And in our affections. Would you help us. Always. To look to you. To listen to you. And to follow you.

And in so doing. Would we know. What it is. To be changed. To be transformed. To be made. More like you. Jesus. We ask this.

In your name. And for your glory. Amen.