

James Austin death

### Luke Series Slide

From April 5<sup>th</sup> 1992- to February 29 1996, for nearly 4 years, the city of Sarajevo was under military siege during the Bosnian war.

A siege, in case you aren't familiar, is a military blockade of a city that attempts over the long haul to slowly take over that city both by military conflict and by cutting off supplies such as food.

It's an excruciating, long-term, death by a thousand little deaths.

Removing people from the food, shelter, and sense of safety that we need to function.

That's why the story I'm going to tell you this morning is so remarkable.

On May 27, 1992, at the beginning of the conflict, people were standing in line at a bakery hoping to get some bread. A mortar round was fired right into the middle of the line.

22 people...men, women, children...were dead.

What's the right response to that?

Better security measures? A secret underground distribution of bread? A military response?

Well, all of those are legitimate responses. We think of them as legitimate because they are all pragmatic. They all attempt to solve the problem.

But **Vedran Smailovic** had a different approach.

I'm going to read this excerpt from an article about him.

*From <https://www.readthespirit.com/explore/vedran-smajlovic-cellist-of-sarajevo-still-moves-the-world/>*

**"Smailović lived close to the bakery and was appalled by what he saw as he helped the wounded. He felt powerless as he was neither a politician nor a soldier—he was a musician, who could speak truth to the heart beyond any language.**

**Smajlović took his cello to the spot where those waiting for bread had been butchered and began to plaintively play. He played in a daze but in an incredibly evocative way. In spite of the risk, people gathered to listen. When he was finished he packed up his cello and went to a coffee shop. Quickly people came up to him expressing their appreciation, "This is what we needed."**

### **PIC of CELLIST in RUBBLE**

**Smajlović went back the next day and the next 22 days, one for each person killed. Sniper fire continued around him and mortars still rained down in the neighborhood, but Smajlović never stopped playing.**

### **PIC of CELLIST in front of Flowers**

**Then he went to other sites where shells had taken the lives of Sarajevo's citizens. He played there, and he played in graveyards. He played at funerals at no charge, even though the Serbian gunners would target such gatherings. His music was a gift to all hiding in their basements with rubble above their heads, a voice for peace for those daily dodging the bullets of the snipers.**

**As the reports of Smajlović's performances on the shattered streets spread, he became a symbol for peace. A reporter questioned whether he was crazy to play his cello outside in the midst of a war zone.**

**He countered, "You ask me 'am I crazy for playing the cello', why do you not ask if they are crazy for [destroying] Sarajevo?"**

**Title Slide: "Heads in the Cloud, Cellos in the Rubble: How to Slowly See the Kingdom of God Until You Don't Taste Death"- Luke 9:26-37**

Smailovic went to war...with a cello.

He fought injustice, death, & darkness...with beauty & risk.

For those 22 days he played Tomaso Albinoni's *Adagio in G Minor*.

Do you know what Adagio means? It means the piece is to be played SLOWLY. Which means in the middle of all that rubble- snipers and bombs- all that heartbreak...all that devastation and fear, uncertainty, and death- He couldn't hurry through the beauty. He couldn't speed up the piece to protect himself. He had to sit calmly and confidently- and PLAY SLOWLY to bring life and hope back to a shell-shocked people.

And it may have been Adagio in G minor- but to play like that- in those conditions- well Vedran Smailovic is a MAJOR G! A non-anxious presence. A pillar. With his music- he cultivated a place of flourishing and life in the midst of death.

#### **Luke 9:26-37**

**For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and that of the Father and the holy angels. 27 Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."**

**28 About eight days after this conversation, he took along Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. 30 Suddenly, two men were talking with him — Moses and Elijah. 31 They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem.**

**32 Peter and those with him were in a deep sleep, and when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men who were standing with him. 33 As the two men were departing from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it's good for us to be here. Let's set up three shelters: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" — not knowing what he was saying.**

**34 While he was saying this, a cloud appeared and overshadowed them. They became afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 Then a voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, the Chosen One; listen to him! "**

**36 After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They kept silent, and at that time told no one what they had seen.**

**37 The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.**

Transition: Jesus took Peter James & John into a cloud of glory...and then took them back into a crowd standing in the rubble.

Lets see why. Ive got 2 points to explain this passage today.

## 1) Keep your head in the glory cloud, like a cello in a symphony.

- There has been some debate over the years by what Jesus meant when he said to his disciples that some of them who were standing there would not die before they saw the Kingdom of God
- **v 26-27**
- Jesus says that some of the disciples standing with him will not “taste death” until they see the kingdom of God. It sort of seems like he’s talking about when he returns at the end of all things. In which it would be impossible for those disciples to have lived that long. Because Jesus still hasn’t come back yet.
- But Notice in v 26- he speaks of “coming in his glory” in the context of the Transfiguration.
- **v 31 -32**
- Glory, in some cases, means light. A shining or glowing.
- **v 26-27**
- Even though- in those previous verses- it sure sounds like a reference to the time when Jesus comes back for good.
- Kingdom of God = Culture of God
- God makes all things right...all things just...that he brings shalom. That everything is as its supposed to be. That God is the king and his kingdom is ordered as it should be.
- In other words, what Peter, James, and John are about to see in the transfiguration...is a preview...insight into...what the Kingdom of God looks like when it comes in full.
- SO what DO they see?
- Well, first, they see a sort of recreation of several biblical events.
- **v 28-29**
- Notice that Jesus takes them up on a high mountain...and he transfigures in front of them.

- Transfigure just means that his appearance changed.
- Jesus clothes become radiant, glowing... intensely white
- **v30-31**
- And then Elijah and Moses, who have LONG been dead show up and are talking with Jesus.
- And Luke includes what they are talking about- Jesus' departure.
- The word departure here is "Exodus"
- **v33**
- Then Peter, who is terrified along with James and John, says this thing about making 3 tents...or tabernacles for Elijah and Moses and Jesus.
- **v34-35**
- Then a cloud completely envelops them and they hear God's voice say "This is my Son, listen to him."

### **Back to 1)**

- Here's what all this means.
- First of all- there are biblical parallels to things that happened in the lives of Moses and Elijah.
- Remember Moses went up on a mountain to get God's law.
- Additionally, on that mountain, he saw God's glory. And he came down off the mountain glowing.
- At the top of that mountain for Moses, was a cloud and he heard God's voice.
- Of course- Moses was called by God to lead the original Exodus- freeing Israel from slavery in Egypt.
- Elijah, was on Mt Carmel when he challenged the prophets of Baal to a worship duel. And what Baal couldn't do, God did.
- And then a cloud appeared at the top of Mt Carmel....and rain fell on the land to end a drought.

## **Malachi 4:4-5**

- And then there is the prophet Malachi.
- Who, when predicting the DAY OF THE LORD...the day when God brings justice and makes things right...he brings up Moses and Elijah.
- **V 35**
- Of course, remember when Jesus was baptized?
- God spoke from the heavens and said, "this is my son, with whom I'm well pleased"
- Now, he says, "This is my Son- the anointed one- the Messiah, listen to him"

## **Back to 1)**

- Here's what's happening
- Jesus has called in 3 of his disciples, to get a preview of what's to come.
- Remember, he's just told them that he is going to suffer and die and resurrect.
- He's just given them this counter intuitive paradigm...that they will have to die to live and lose to gain.
- So, he shows them what they are going to gain.
- He is showing them that the suffering to come is not a departure from what Moses taught them...or Elijah showed them...or Malachi prophesied.
- Its not a plan B. Its not something different.
- Its what God has planned all along.
- That's why he says, This is my son, Listen to him.
- He's telling them that this plan of a cross...of suffering...of dying and resurrecting is not a failure of God's promises...it's the fulfillment of them.
- And what about those intensely white robes?

- Well, throughout Scripture, white robes are a symbol of righteousness. Unstained. Pure. Whole. NO DIRT. NO GRIME. NO SIN. NO UGLINESS.
- Shalom.
- See, Peter and James and John are getting a preview of the Great Day of the LORD.
- They are being completely enveloped in the glory of God... surrounded by a cloud of his glory, hearing his voice, seeing, without the ugliness of the world...the purity and beauty of his son.
- Why?
- Well, because in the middle of a very confusing world...and especially for Peter, James and John...a very confusing plan (die to live? Suffer? Carry a cross? How does that help anything?)...in the middle of that confusing plan...they needed some reassurance from Jesus that this was the same God they had always believed. That this was the same Messiah that Moses and Elijah and Malachi pointed them to
- Here's one reason that's important for you and me to grasp.
- Jesus calls all his disciples to bear a cross. To suffer. To die. To be humbled.
- When you take up a cross...but fail to keep put your head in the cloud of God's glory on a regular basis...you will forget what you're doing.
- You will forget how suffering fits into God's plan. You will be tempted to turn the gospel into something its not.
- You'll turn the gospel into good news that God always keeps you from pain. Or that sudden deaths of husband, and father and friend won't happen. Or that life will always go as you planned it.
- If you don't get that God is working on something now- but the glory comes later- you'll always be looking to squeeze the glory out of the broken things.
- **This preview of the Resurrection wasn't given to them to rescue them from suffering...but to prepare them for it!**
- To show them what was on the other side.



- I just recently read about an experiment where two different groups were given backpacks. One- told- there's nothing important. Just weight. The other group- this is important equipment that the scientist at the top of the mountain need to complete their task.
- Afterward- first group reported the journey was much much more difficult. - PURPOSE- understanding.
- LIKEWISE- "swim as far as you can"- or "Swim to the other side of the pool"
- This was like going to a symphony and hearing a Cello. It was going up the mountain, getting out of the fray, quieting the noise of the crowds, stepping away from the brokenness...and concentrating on the fulfillment of the promises of God in his Son.
- Church- we will never be ready for any evil...any ugliness...any brokenness and disappointment and death...if we don't continually have moments where we move our eyes off of our suffering and plight...and turn them to the glory of God.
- You have to go up the mountain and meet with Christ. You have to see him in his glory. You have to go to the symphony and hear the Cello play with all the other instruments. The way its intended to be heard. You have to stick your head in the Glory Cloud.
- How do you do that? Well, you meet with God...you see his son revealed in the Scripture. Moses to Elijah to Malachi to Jesus to the description of the final resurrection in Revelation.
- You immerse yourself in the Scripture. Have intentional conversations about life and death and NHNE with other believers.
- You stop...daily...and take a trip into God's glory. Out of the fray, and into the cloud.

#### **v18 & 28**

Peter's declaration of Jesus' messiahship...and the transfiguration happen during a Prayer session. Communion with God.

#### **v 27**

Reverse this verse.

See the Kingdom of God until you don't Taste Death.  
But its Adagio. Its played slowly. It doesn't happen in an instant like the transfiguration. Its slow- going back time after time after time to the Scriptures, to prayer, to the church.

- **Colossians 3:1-4**
- **So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.**
- **2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**

**TRANSITION:** BUT...we can't stay on the mountain. Remember, Jesus call was to suffer and die...THEN RESURRECT.

Likewise, he told his disciples to lose...before they gain. To die, before they live.

...and that means...we have come down out of the cloud and into the fray.

Like a cellist into a sniper's crosshairs.

## **2) We represent God's glory in the valley of the shadow of death, like cellos in a war.**

- When the Cellist of Sarajevo went for 22 straight days and sat among the rubble and blood of war to play Adagio...I love that he did it in his tuxedo.
- Like, he didn't go out there in camouflage with a battle helmet on.
- No. He went out in the same clothes he wears at a symphony.
- You might say his intensely white robes were actually a black coat with tails.
- The point is...he carried everything he took from the symphony...into the war.
- **V 33**
- Peter's first reaction to the beauty of the transfiguration, is to set up little tabernacles of worship on the mountain. "Lets stay here in the symphony forever"

- **V 36**
- But suddenly, Moses and Elijah disappeared.
- And only Jesus remained.
- All the glory...sort of faded away...and it was just Jesus again.
- All the pageantry was gone. The high had past. And they started down the mountain.
- **V 36**
- And in Marks gospel- Its actually Jesus who tells them to keep what they saw quiet until he had actually resurrected.
- Essentially, this was because there was more for Jesus to do before that time came...and he wasn't interested in people being further confused about his messiahship...trying to make him a King before he suffered.

#### **v 37**

- The very next scene is Jesus and the disciples coming down off of the mountain- unable to tell everyone what just happened,...and the demanding and exhausting crowds are waiting.
- With all their expectations.
- With all their sick and broken bodies.
- With demon possession.
- And bickering between the disciples and Pharisees.

Our Metro students just got back from Camp. Its kind of like that. Away at this special place where your whole schedule is set up to focus on Jesus...and then BANG- back into the reality of life and chores, and arguing with siblings, and people that don't know Jesus...

- In other words, as they depart the glory of God, they enter back into chaos, fighting, demonic oppression, disease, distraction...and evil.

#### **Back to 2)**

- Here's what's going on.
- Do you remember after Moses goes up Mt Sinai to encounter God and receive the law. After Moses comes down out of the cloud and back to the people of Israel?

- He comes down...and he's glowing. His face is lit up with God's glory.
- But what does he come down to?
- The people of Israel are worshipping and idol. A golden calf. They're drunk. They're participating in all sorts of pagan orgies and Egyptian worship practices...and they are calling it all YHWH worship.
- And then there is blame shifting...shame...fear.
- Remember after Elijah defeats the prophets of Baal...he has to run for his life and hide in caves because Jezebel has hitmen out to kill him.
- Remember when Jesus comes up out of the waters of his baptism... after the heavens break open and the Holy Spirit descends as a dove and the voice of the Father says "This is my son with whom I'm well pleased"...after John the Baptist...the second Elijah...says "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."
- ...Jesus walked into a desert to fast for 40 days and nights and be tempted by the devil.
- Listen, God doesn't bring you into a relationship with him...to experience his glory and then section yourself off from the world.
- No. If you have been brought close to God...you are sent...with your black coat tails and Cello, back into the fray...back down the mountain...out into the wilderness...to confront Satan with the Word of God...to challenge Jezebel...to call for the repentance of idol worship...and to resist temptation yourself.
- You are called to go into the valley of the Shadow of Death...into the bakery line for 22 days...and play the heck out of Adagio in G Minor.
- But even though you are headed into a war, don't forget to where your black coat.
- The glory of God that we see in the face of Jesus Christ is meant to be carried with us into the war.

In fact- the very next story is about a boy that has a demon that throws him into seizures and the disciples cant heal him. In Mark's gospel Jesus says "This one can only come out through prayer". In other words- Peter, James and John immediately forgot communion with God. That left the mountain top experience on the mountain top. They disconnected what they saw in the Glory of God from the everyday brokenness of life and the demands life made of them.

- **Exodus 32:1**
- When Moses went up Mt. Sinai and the Israelites constructed a golden calf to worship, they did it because Moses left them and went up the mountain to be with God.
- And they weren't sure he was coming back down.
- They acted in fear and unbelief.
- That's exactly what happens here.
- Jesus leaves the disciples and go up the mountain and when they are faced with something they can't handle...they don't remember what Jesus has taught them...they don't trust in his presence...they turn their focus into an argument about the pragmatics of healing... instead of calling on the presence of God.

## **Back to 2)**

### **2 Cor 4:16-18**

**16 Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. 17 For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. 18 So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

But its not just for our encouragement....

### **2 Corinthians 5:20-21**

**20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God." 21 He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

**Transition:** But remember- Patience is necessary- this is Adagio, Its played slowly

- **v 22 & v31**
- What was this conversation like. Jesus knew what had to happen. Knew he had to suffer and die.
- He was putting his head on the departure. The exodus. Him leading his people out of slavery to sin.
- He was remembering the backpack he had on had a purpose- your redemption.

### **Hebrews 12:1-2**

**Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, 2 keeping our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

- Already and not yet.
- Remember and Wait.
- How will you face death? of people you love...and your own?
- How all you face suffering?

Prayer Counselors