

Title: *Up On The Mountain*

Text: Luke 9:28-43

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Any “Antiques Roadshow” fans here? Am I the only one? If you have ever seen just one episode, you know that it is the “provenance,” the verifiable stories, brought to an object adds value to it. Those events, letters, or people make an item valuable, sometimes priceless.

For instance, an antique teapot is “worth its weight in silver.” We can melt it down and sell it for a good sum of money. Yet, take that same silver teapot and look at the bottom of it. On the bottom we see a maker’s mark, but not just any mark. No, it is from the silversmith Paul Revere. Its provenance adds value to the item. But find a letter describing how this particular item was given to Benjamin Franklin for his use in France and the item becomes priceless. The maker’s mark and attached letter adds tremendous value to the teapot. That is called “provenance,” and with such a “provenance” that item is now worth more. It is the item’s story that adds value to it.

In today’s passage, we find God established Jesus’ “provenance” on the mountaintop at the Transfiguration. We find Jesus’ life and ministry being impacted by who was on the mountain: on the one hand, Moses and on the other hand, Elijah. But the real worth was the Creator speaking the words to the witnesses. Up on the mountain, they saw a cloud and heard a voice say, *“This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”*

Today’s story leads us to ask what our provenance is. That is the secret to Lent. The church’s calendar is set up so that we go up on the mountain with Jesus to remember where his story originates, and as we enter into Lent, we are to ruthlessly examine our lives related to our prayers, our fasting, and our relationship with those who are in need. Our provenance as God’s children adds value to our life which is what we will discuss this morning.

One of our provenance pieces comes through our children and how they see us. What they tell us reveals things about us. There is a story that gives witness to what I mean. Let me tell you about Charles.

Charles is a good guy. He has a BIG heart and a lot of love to share. Yet, like many of us in this fast-paced and busy world, Charles found himself with too many commitments in too few days. He was nervous about all the things on his “to do” list and tense about checking off all the boxes. He was so busy that normal things were becoming annoyances and put off. His family noticed a change in him. He snapped at his wife and children. He choked down his food at mealtimes only to hurry off. If he were reading a book to unwind a bit, he would feel irate when someone would interrupt his “me” time. The stress was catching up with him.

It all came to a head for Charles when his youngest daughter wanted to tell him something important. Charles had just sat down with the remote in his hand, enjoyable book on his lap, and a cup of green tea when she interrupted his thoughts and began hurriedly saying, “Daddy, I want to tell you something. I will tell you really fast.”

Charles answered, “Honey, you can tell me anything, and you do not have to tell me really fast. Say it slowly.” His youngest looked at him square in the eye, put her hands on her hips, and she gave him an answer he never forgot. She said, “Then listen slowly.”

There is the provenance for Charles. What an awakening for Charles in his busy-ness. His story was becoming one of impatience and irritation. His daughter’s words ring true for many of us.

So, what do our children say about us? How do our lives add value to the lives of others? My friends, we are like Charles, and we do live in a fast-paced world. When we are over-busy and over-scheduled, we react in ways that are not normal. We are so busy just getting through the moments that we do not stop and let the quietness of God add value to our relationships. Remember Charles’ daughter’s words – “Listen slowly.”

Today is called “Transfiguration of the Lord” Sunday but we can rename it for today. We can call it provenance Sunday. I want to turn your attention to a small but significant word in our text. Notice the word “after” in verse 28. That one word unlocks this mysterious passage. Luke says, “About eight days after Jesus said this....” Anyone wonder what did Jesus say “before”? Recall Jesus asks his disciples “Who do people say that I am?” Peter responds, “You are the Christ....” Peter says it! Finally, someone understands who Jesus is and what he is about! He knows who Jesus is and there are high-fives all around the group!

Yet, Jesus blows their minds with talk of his suffering dishonor and painful death. Jesus says, “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.” From the height of Peter’s admission of being the Christ, Jesus shatters Peter and the disciples’ dream. They left everything to follow him and now Jesus is talking of his death. The foreshadowing of the cross fell upon their hearts filling them with fear and gloom. Put yourself in their shoes. Their provenance came through their belief that Jesus was going to overturn Roman rule, and they would have a seat in his kingdom. They would have positions of power and prestige. Oh, how wrong they were!

Once Jesus makes his declaration that he must die, the next six days are filled with silence! Nothing is said. Their dreams and world view is shattered. How are they to make sense of Jesus’ words about who he really is? How shall they make sense of his saying that a person shall find life by losing it? And “after” these ponderings, they are ready to go up on the mountaintop.

Up on the mountain, God’s voice says to Peter, James, and John: “This is my Son, listen slowly and hear to him!” Friends, Lent’s power is found in our slowing down and listening to Jesus and he is where you will find value. His story will provide hope to the hopeless and release to the captives and power over the powerful.

Hear Jesus say, “Peter, do not be so quick to shape the world as you see it. John, you do not need to climb the corporate ladder and be number one. James, you do not need to be first. No, slow down and listen. My Son is trying to show you another way, another world, another kingdom from where you will find value and you must be willing to listen slowly to him.”

Again, in verse 28, we are told Jesus went up the mountain to “pray.” In prayer, Jesus finds strength for what he will have to do. In our journey to Jerusalem, our prayers are essential for our strength, too. In prayer, we listen and find strength and courage to do what we need to do.

So, do we take the time to pray? Or are we in a hurry and full of check lists and to do activities? Are we so busy that God's peeking in our room anxious to tell us something, yet we are so busy that God says, "I'll tell you quickly so you can listen in a hurry!" Lent is our reminder that we really need to listen slowly. Answers come in the still small voice of God, my friends. Take time, slow down, and listen to the one who add value to your life.

There is one more thing I want to mention in this text. If we read the English version and just stop there, we will miss something found in the original language. The Greek word for "listen" means, "come to know." Listen slowly with that added value of God's invitation to us, to you. God says, "This is my Son, the Chosen One; come to know him!"

In our prayer time, God wants for us to "come to know him." For when we take the time to listen slowly, we come to know Jesus and in our coming to know him our provenance is made clear. We are not rushing to the next activity. We are to listen intently to find our lives being "transformed" by the glory of the presence of God in our lives. When we listen – really listen – we come to know Jesus, and we cannot help but be changed.

As we come into the season of Lent let us reflect on the waters of our baptism. Those healing and transformative waters that are the story of God's amazing, yet invisible grace. From the glory of God upon the mountaintop, may we hear God's voice calling to each one of us saying, "You are my son" or "You are my daughter. You have much greater value than you really know."

As you listen slowly, you are invited to come to this Sacred Supper as we continue to come to know Jesus "listening slowly" to him, who the "pioneer and perfecter of our faith." (Heb. 12:12)

When come to truly know Jesus, our lives will be transformed. It cannot be helped. So, as we come down off the mountain, may we turn our face to this table, listen slowly and put aside the checklists, the overpacked schedules, and overburdened lives to listen to the one who wants to love us and live inside us.

Slow down, listen, and come to the table. Hear the words of God's story adding value to our lives as he says to us – This is my son: Come to Him and listen slowly. For in him, you will find your true purpose, your true worth, your true value. Amen.

Luke 9:28-37

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"-- not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and, in those days, told no one any of the things they had seen. On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him.