

“What to Do?”

Isaiah 66:1-2; Galatians 1:3-10;
Matthew 17:1-9

Pastor Norman Fowler
First Presbyterian Church of Moscow
March 3, 2013

As we have been walking through Lent, we have been walking with Peter. As we have been walking with Peter we may have begun to get to know him a little bit. Peter is that one who, when Jesus came walking along the shores of Galilee, jumped up and followed Jesus. Sometimes we think of Peter as a little impetuous. He's the one who, as Jesus came walking across the water, wanted to get out of the boat and walk on the water with him, and did so until he began to sink. Peter is the one who seems to be coming forward and asking the question about what's going on and wondering how it fits with what he knows. Then when he thinks he's got it right, he's the one who's willing to tell Jesus, “You've got it wrong!” Remember last week he rebuked Jesus?

This week Peter and James and John go up the mountain with Jesus. They have this glorious vision in front of them. It's incredible! What would you say? It's interesting what Peter says. He says, “Lord, it's good that we are here.” Now, doesn't that strike you as a little bit odd? It does me. Why doesn't he say, “Thank you, Lord, for letting us be here.” See the difference? Lord, it is good. He's still telling Jesus what the right thing to do is. It's good for us to be here. At least he got the “us” in there and didn't say “It's good for *me* to be here,” because isn't that where he's coming from? It's all about him. “Now, what can I do? I'm ready to build.” It's still about what he can do.

Why does he have to insert himself into this? Isn't this a good time to sit back and listen? After all, it says Jesus and Moses and Elijah are having a conversation. If he had listened, maybe we would have known what that conversation was about. Instead we have to hear about what *he* says. I don't think he thinks he'll build a house and now he'll have a new way to light it. There's got to be more to it. He doesn't seem to be able to get beyond what's going on in himself to watch and see and take in what's going on beyond him. It's good for me to be here. What's going on out there? Isn't it amazing?

Maybe I relate to this so much—there's that old saying if the shoe fits, wear it—because it's hard to get beyond what's going on in my own head, my own life to see what's going on beyond. So there are two things. Maybe I'm just too busy myself wanting to build things—to build my life, to build an institution—all kinds of things we could build, and especially when I get to thinking it's about me.

There are two pieces to this particular scripture I think we can see ways that we are being called beyond ourselves. It would be easy to skip over the first one because it begins with the disciples agreeing to go up the mountain. They made the choice to go. Remember last week, we talked about how we have to bring our hearts near to God. There has to be a coming near. They had to be willing to follow Jesus up the mountain. There's the invitation. We have to at least take the invitation to start coming near. There's so much else in our lives that says “come here” or “go there” hearing even that

invitation can be hard. The invitation, though, is to come. It's an invitation to come and worship. It's an invitation to come and see. It's an invitation to come into scripture. It's an invitation to go into prayer. It's an invitation to come to Jesus and see where he will take us.

He takes these disciples up a mountain and there they have an encounter with God, but does Peter really recognize what's going on? I would think if you had an encounter with God, you would just sit back, amazed. Are we so caught up with what's going on inside our own minds that we can't see what God does even when God does something incredible? It feels to me like Peter is so stuck on what he can do and how it's about him that it takes God coming along and saying, "This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to *him!*" Does anybody else feel a little bit like Peter?

What is God asking for us to do? Come near, open our hearts, open our lives. We are invited to come. We are invited to come gather around a table. When we come to the table are we supposed to make it into something, or do we come, open, and allow God to do God's work?

We are invited. It's a privilege. It's a wonder. God is here! We need merely come near and be in awe. We are invited to come, to listen, and to see God at work. Amen.

Lord, we have a lot going on in our lives. We recognize the many thoughts we have, the plans, the concerns, the pushes and pulls. In the midst of all that, Lord, help us hear your invitation to come near and let us open our hearts and minds to you, allow you to feed us, and recognize that you are the one who gives us what we need: your grace, your goodness, the hope you share, the forgiveness you offer, the life you lead us to when we open ourselves to you and allow you to lead us. Let us listen. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.