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Jesscia: Welcome to Lectionary Kickstart, where we're sparking your thoughts for Sunday as you plan your sermon or teaching lesson. I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau, here with Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger. They're both professors of homiletics here at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. You can hear all about us in our introductory episode, but trust me, they are pretty good preachers. All right, let's get started. Peter, where are we in the church here?

Peter: We're thinking about the Transfiguration of Our Lord. It's this kind of hinge Sunday between the season of Epiphany and leading toward the season of Lent.

Jesscia: And David, what are the texts for today?

David: The texts are Deuteronomy 34, Hebrews 3, Luke 9, and Psalm 99.

Jesscia: As always, I ask each of you to tell me which text you choose to preach about to determine who goes first. In the Old Testament reading, it says that even though Moses got older, his eyes were on dimmed, his vigor unabated. How old were you when you started wearing glasses?

David: Oh my gosh, I can't remember.

Peter: Forty-three.

Jesscia: Really?
To the day.

David: Oh man, I wore glasses in grade school.

Peter: Oh really?

Jesscia: All right. I didn't start until I was an adult, so Peter, you win. You get to go first.

Peter: All right. I would preach on Luke 9, the Gospel reading. If you're going to celebrate Transfiguration, to me, the Transfiguration is just such a unique event that it seems like if you're going to celebrate it, you ought to preach on that text. There's other ways you get to it. These other texts are all fine too. I have this conflicted relationship with the Transfiguration text though because I find it so fascinating. I think it's a really important event, and yet it's kind of hard to preach on it because you can't possibly recreate the experience for your hearers. They're not going to be blinded by the light. They're not going to have clouds around them. So that I find kind

of hard, but I think it's an important text theologically, so I'd lean there. It's a fascinating story because Jesus just does something very different in this text than he ever does and shows something about himself. It makes sense that it's the end of Epiphany because it's kind of a revelation. So I would preach on, I think, the Luke 9 text. What's difficult about this text, I think, is there's so much going on that's highly mysterious and peaks our curiosity. You've got Jesus' physical change. Just the physical change is just odd. His face is altered, clothes as bright as light. That's odd. You've got the conversation with Moses and Elijah, which is weird. These two people who've been gone a very long time now are on the mountain with Jesus. Why these two? How do they know it's him? Peter says, one for Moses, one for Elijah.

Jesscia: That's the question I've heard most in Bible studies when we cover this text. How did they know it was Moses and Elijah?

Peter: Yeah, I don't know. But that raises a question. You've got Peter's attempt to keep him there. Usually preachers say something like, it's such a great experience, mountain top experience, you want to stay there. But I'm actually not sure that's why. Peter just has this impulse to want it to continue, I guess.

David: I think Luke says he didn't know what he was saying, right?

Peter: Yeah, Peter doesn't know what he's saying. So why does he say that when he doesn't know what to say? Then there's the cloud that overshadows them, and they are afraid as they entered it. So the cloud is something that they went into, but they were afraid. So there's just such a lot of weird stuff here that I'm not sure we can get a lot of answers to these questions. So at any rate, what I'd want to do is try to cut through all the weird and mysterious and get to something clear. So Jessica, would you read verses 34 and 35?

Jesscia: As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud saying, this is my Son, my chosen one, listen to Him.

Peter: It's that last bit, the voice from the cloud. This is my Son, my chosen one, listen to Him. Of all the stuff that's odd and unclear and mysterious and confusing and raises question, this statement from the cloud is crystal clear. Who is Jesus? We were talking earlier about the questions, who is Jesus and what does he do? Who is Jesus? Well, he is the Son of God. Punked. That's it. Son of God, the chosen one. He is the chosen son of God. Now, that's a really important theological idea. Of course, it gets into Trinitarian theology. But what's most important for us besides to know who Jesus is, is to what do

we do about it? And then the voice at the end, listen to Him. Of course, these are the same language that comes up in Jesus' baptism, except there's not the listen to Him part. And so that to me is worth chewing on. So I would focus the sermon, I think, on the listen to Him. And I would invite people to consider how well we listen to Jesus and to whom else do we listen. So maybe I would start by inviting people just to think about who they listen to. Jessica, you produce podcasts, I've heard.

Jesscia: A few.

Peter: So I assume you listen to some podcasts.

Jesscia: Yes.

Peter: All right, how do you choose which podcast to listen to?

Jesscia: Sometimes I listen to ones that are similar to the kind that I'm doing so that I can get ideas or see things that I like or I don't like. But sometimes I just listen to ones that will keep my attention while I'm driving.

Peter: Do you listen to podcasts, Dave?

David: Not a lot of them, no.

Jesscia: But you listen to all of the Lectionary Kick-starts.

David: No, I hate hearing my voice. Oh, gosh.

Peter: Well, we listen to all sorts of people, right? We listen to podcasts, we listen to news anchors, we listen to our friends, we listen to, well, you follow people on Facebook, on X, Instagram, all sorts of things. There's all sorts of listening. So the idea is that we listen to, we take in, we receive from lots of different people.

David: And a lot of people want us listening to them.

Peter: Right. A lot of people want us to listen to them, and so they work really hard listen to what they say. But so, of course, your hearers, the to encourage us to people in the pews are listening to you, your preaching, and they're listening to Jesus. I mean, they're here probably not because of you, hopefully not because of you. They're here because of Jesus. They've listened to Jesus and they've heard things that have changed their lives, and so they come back, they want to listen some more. And we listen to lots of other people who influence us and who shape us, who sometimes we maybe hear more closely or listen to more closely than Jesus. So I would want to invite people to think about who they listen to, who do they really hear, who shapes their lives, shapes their hearts. And the whole sermon would be in some ways a reflection on who do

you listen to and what do you hear them say. So there'd be some, I think, first of all, does that sound like a useful idea?

David: I like that idea of listening. And I mean, I think there's so many different ways you can go about it, right? So you could talk about listening to people who know your past, listening to people who know your present, and listening to someone who knows your future. So there's people who know your past, they know all about you, and you can listen to them trusting that what they're saying to you is targeted and is aware of who you are and what your interests are and what you've been through. Listening to somebody who knows your present, they may not know where you come from, but they're very well informed. I mean, you go to a doctor and you listen to someone who knows your present. They've analyzed and they have things about your life right now. But for me, when I listen to Jesus, I'm listening to someone who knows my future. And that's a whole different thing.

Peter: Well, you bring, you know, just you talking there, Dave, makes me think about the relationship between trust and listening. We tend to hear the people we trust.

David: The people we trust.

Peter: And so I wonder if there'd be a way in the sermon to emphasize the invitation not only to listen to Jesus, but to trust Him.

David: And I like that because, you know, when you listen to somebody you trust, the conversation's more fluid and it's easier. Because I think a lot of times we listen with distrust and we're constantly examining everything that's being said and testing it against our own knowledge and our own experience and, you know, trying to discern whether or not they're trying to play me on this or whatever. But when you're listening to somebody you trust, you kind of lay that all aside.

Peter: And that's kind of exhausting, isn't it?

David: It is exhausting.

Peter: Talking to people that you don't trust and you're on your guard and you're carefully thinking what you might say and you're suspicious of everything, that's just exhausting. But if you're listening to somebody who you know what they have to say is good for you, then that's almost a place of rest.

David: Right, yeah.

Jesscia: I think drawing people's attention to who they listen to is a good idea because we listen to so many different voices that we don't pay attention necessarily to the way that they're influencing us.

Right? I remember listening to a certain podcast so much because I enjoyed it and I didn't even realize it but then as a host I started talking like this guy and I listened to the recording I was like, oh no, that's not what I wanted. But by listening to somebody over, by just hearing somebody instead of actually listening, even just hearing like the noise, it influences you. So I should be more careful about who I'm letting, who I'm hearing and only listen to the voices that are going to be good.

Peter: And there's voices we listen to in podcasts, all the stuff we talked about. There's also voices in your own head, right?

Jessica: I hate those voices.

Peter: That you listen to that can be really unhelpful sometimes because of course we've got a sinful nature inside of us that kind of speaks a different word sometimes than Jesus speaks. And so what would be really interesting to maybe consider would, so the Father says from the cloud, listen to Him. If you were to finish the sentence, listen to Him and not so much fill in the blank. What would God say to that? And maybe that's just something to think about. But so what I want to do in the sermon is invite them to think about who they listen to, who they really take to heart, who they hear. And then also acknowledge that the people that have come to worship that day have come because they want to listen to Jesus, because they've heard Him say things. And so you could even, maybe even during the week leading up to the sermon, invite people to share with you either in meetings or if you want to do some sort of email thing or Facebook thing or whatever. What have you heard Jesus say that makes you want to come back and hear more? And so you could just kind of fly through, for instance, the book of Luke after this text when the Father says listen to Him, then going forward you'd hope this was ringing in the disciples' ears and you hear Jesus, for instance, in Luke 11 teach them how to pray. So listen to Him to learn how to pray. In Luke 12 you hear Jesus say don't be anxious about your life, about what you will wear, about all these things. Trust in Him. You hear Jesus say in Luke 14 pick up your cross and follow me. You hear Jesus say in Luke 18 let the little children come to me. Those little snotty, grubby hands children, let them come to me. In Luke 18 you've got Jesus saying listen up, I will be betrayed and I will suffer and die and I will rise on the third day. Luke 24, Jesus speaks words of peace and then He sends them. And so I think what you could do as a preacher is either, and maybe both, either invite your hearers to share with you what they've heard from Jesus that has stuck with them, that's significant, or you might say here's what the disciples heard later on and pick one of those that would be particularly

helpful for your hearers. And of course the most important thing that the disciples and that we hear from Jesus is His words of grace and forgiveness and life, His promises to which we cling and faith and the ones that bring us salvation and a full and abundant life here on earth. So whatever you listen to Jesus say, I would want to make sure the sermon is proclaiming loudly and clearly the promises of God in Christ that give us life.

Jesscia: Awesome.

Thank you Peter. But how did they know it was Moses and Elijah?

Peter: I don't know. I guess they had name tags.

Do you know Dave?

David: Oh there we go. That's good.

Peter: And Moses is still lugging around the tablets.

The Ten Commandments.

Jesscia: Elijah got out of the chariot. I see.

Okay. Awesome. Thank you Peter. David, what about you? What would you preach on?

David: Well, like Peter, I'm thinking it's the transfiguration and so I would preach on the Luke 9 text just so you're preaching on the transfiguration. And particularly for me, the one verse that stuck out for me is at the very end of the text. Jessica, if you could read verse 36.

Jesscia: And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone and they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

David: Okay. That to me just strikes me as so odd because the text is filled with such bizarre things. Right. I mean, Jesus is praying. I mean, like this time when I read the text, I had never, I've always pictured the transfiguration of Jesus as standing there and then suddenly He's transformed. But Luke says as He was praying, His face was altered. And so you've got Jesus in prayer and they're watching Him pray and suddenly His face becomes different. You've got the cloud that envelops them. I mean, it's just, it is so bizarre. And to go through all of that and then not tell anyone about it, it's just really interesting. I mean, we have miracles where Jesus says don't tell anyone about this. I mean, we have those accounts, but there's no command not to share this with anyone and yet they don't. And so for me, that keeping silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen, that obviously they did tell somebody at some point because we have the record of it. Right. So they had to have told somebody at some point, but at this point they didn't. And so for me, the

kind of the thing I want to think about is the difference between keeping a secret and carrying a secret. So, you know, there are some people who can't keep a secret. Jessica, you're nodding.

Jesscia: Oh, it's true. And it's so hard to talk to them because you have to the whole time you're thinking, okay, I only can tell this person what I want everyone else to know. I know.

David: Right. Yeah. Yeah.
So there's some people who can't keep a secret and there's other people who can really keep a secret. Right. And so, but as they're, you know, as they're navigating things, they're being very careful with their word choice and they realize that this thing should not be shared. So that's keeping a secret. There's another thing that I would call carrying a secret. And that is you have something that you know, but you're not going to share it right now. You're going to wait until the time is appropriate to share it. So the, like the thing that sticks out for me, although it's not my personal experience, would be the first days after a couple finds out that, you know, the woman is pregnant.

Jesscia: Yes.

David: Right?

Jesscia: Yes.

David: You're carrying a secret. You haven't shared this news with anybody. And what, how does your life change when you carry the secret that you're going to be having a baby? It's almost like you can't tell anybody yet because you have to process the life change. Like I, I've got to think this through. Like this is real now. I need to understand how this is going to change everything before I can talk to other people about it. I'm not ready yet.

David: Okay.

Jesscia: So even though it's a wonderful, it's a wonderful thing.

David: Yes. It's a wonderful thing.

Jesscia: And then sometimes you're like, Oh, this is so special. I think I'll just hold onto this for a while before I tell everybody else. It's just our secret for right now.

David: And does your, does like how you interact with people during the day or anything change?

Jesscia: Yes. Sometimes it just wasn't time to tell that secret yet. Like

when I knew I was pregnant, but my brother said he was engaged. He announced that they were getting married and they were getting married like right at my due date.

David: Oh man.

Jesscia: But I knew it wasn't the time for me to tell my family that I was pregnant. This was their day. This was the exciting news that he was engaged. So it wasn't time. I had a pretty important secret, but I would wait a little bit. It wasn't the right time to share it yet.

David: So for me, it's the, it's thinking about how, you know, they have this secret that would change how they would look at everything. And we have even more reason to kind of look at the world differently because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and our understanding that He has ascended into heaven. And even now, while we're talking, he is ruling over all things. And as we're out there in the world, following our vocations, there's a secret that we carry that changes how we approach life, changes how we approach relationships, changes how we interact with struggles, because we're carrying the secret with us that's been given to us.

Peter: What I think is helpful about this is you kind of take the next step and you think about all Christians living their daily lives are carrying this secret. And it almost gives people permission not to just blurt out the good news or to feel guilty if they're not constantly saying it. You know, you relate to people and you engage them and you carry the good news until an opportune time.

Jesscia: Yeah, it's not always the right time.

Peter: And sometimes we beat ourselves up that we don't say something right away. And I kind of like how this last verse invites us to say it. Sometimes there's a time to keep quiet. There's a time to speak.

David: Right.

Peter: And let your hearers reflect on where they are in their relationship with others. When is it time to actually share the secret then?

David: Yeah. And they've all been given it. We've all received this from Christ, this good news. And most of our life, all of our life is lived carrying it. And there are times to share it. And so I don't know. That's the thing that stuck with me as I read through this text for Transfiguration.

Jesscia: Wonderful. Thank you, David.
That's all for today. We have free resources to guide your next step in planning at ConcordiaTheology.org. Check

it out. Lent is coming. It's a busy time for church workers. I know it's hard to take time for your own Lenten meditations. We have a free resource to help you stay connected to God's wordless Lent. Dr. David Maxwell, one of our systematic theology professors, wrote and preached these five sermons at my church. And the response was incredible. They were so good that I asked him to preach them as part of a video production so they would be available for others. Those videos are available for you at our website, ConcordiaTheology.org. I personally recommend them. People at church started calling him Dr. David Mike Drop Maxwell. Trust me, he's a pretty good preacher. I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau. Join us next week here at Lectionary Kick-start when Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger will spark your thoughts for next Sunday.

Jesscia: I hate those voices.

David: I hate hearing my voice. Oh, gosh.