

“You Can’t Park Here”

The Rev. S. Shane Nanney – February 19, 2023

Matthew 17:1-9

If you want to drive, you must know the signs. They are everywhere. Stop, yield, speed limits and the deceptively important one, no parking. These are deceptive because some of them have times when you can park there and times when you better be gone, or you will be towed away. If the sign had not been there on the street – many would park their vehicle there all day long which would bring its own set of problems through the busy workday. This is also true in our daily lives. If we are not careful, we have the tendency to want to stay, or park, if you will in the wrong place. Some have been parked so long your spirituality has been towed away. I have a simple message for us this morning – You Can’t Park Here.

In our text we find the disciples of Jesus trying to camp out and park. Jesus had less than a week before revealing to his disciples that He was the Christ! And He immediately started to tell them what that meant –

- That He would go to Jerusalem
- That He would Suffer
- That He would Die

With these words hanging in the air, the very next thing the Gospel writers detail is the TRANSFIGURATION. We can only begin to wonder what ran through those disciples' minds.

- Was the truth about Jesus starting to sink in?
- What's this crazy talk about death and resurrection, anyway?
- And what did He mean by “they will see him coming in His Kingdom?”

Every time I read this text it absolutely blows me away. Every time I read it; I can’t help but get that ‘WOW’ feeling.

This text contains such an Experience - one of the most important, yet one of the least understood parts of the Gospel. To me it captures the essence of

Christ's ministry on earth. This particular day outlined in our text starts off ordinary enough. It must be a critical event for us to understand since Matthew, Mark and Luke all write about it in their Gospels. But from here on, ordinary ends. No sooner do they arrive than Jesus is suddenly "TRANSFIGURED."

Transfigure literally means to change shape or form and this is what happened here:

- Jesus changed in appearance before their very eyes.
- His face shone like the Sun.
- His clothes became as White as the Light

If this text does not excite you spiritually something is wrong.

There is something about a Mountaintop Experience. Have you ever experienced those in your lifetime?

- When God blesses you in a Powerful way
- When you have prayed, and God comes through in a Powerful way

If you have ever had a Mountaintop Experience – you have the tendency to want to stay right there. You want to park right there and stay on the Mountaintop.

- On the mountain, we encounter Almighty God -- in the Valley, there is an encounter with the ordinary.
- On the mountain, God's calming Voice is heard -- in the Valley, human arguments are heard
- On the mountain, disciples are in a Mood for Worship -- in the Valley, the disciples are spoiling for a fight
- On the mountain, the glory of God is Revealed -- in the Valley, the power of sin and unbelief is revealed

So, Jesus is TRANSFIGURED right in front of Peter, James, and John. If that were not strange enough the text goes on to say something else now happens. Jesus is Transfigured and - two of faith's most honored heroes suddenly appear by Jesus' side:

- MOSES - the great lawgiver
- ELIJAH - the prophet par excellence.

The Law and the Prophets

Moses, moreover, is also known as the representative of the Law, while Elijah is the Representative of The Prophets. And it was significant that these two men should appear on the Mount, for they were related to Jesus' mission to this world who came to fulfill the "LAW AND THE PROPHETS."

What an experience this must have been for these three disciples to be included in this scene that was now unfolding on the Mountain. Jesus is Transfigured and after that these two Patriarchs appear on the Mountain and began conversing with Jesus.

Of course, a little terror never stopped Peter from speaking up. For lack of any other ideas, he suggests BUILDING THREE TENTS TO COMMEMORATE THE EVENT! Peter said to Jesus, "LORD, IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE. IF YOU WISH, I WILL PUT UP THREE SHELTERS - ONE FOR YOU, ONE FOR MOSES AND ONE FOR ELIJAH."

- For one brief shining moment God had cracked the door to the end of time and they had seen how history would be worked out.
- And they would never be the same again.

Peter says – "What a wonderful thing this is! LET'S STAY HERE."

- How about a fresh start here, Jesus?
- On our own terms
- On our own mountain!
- Don't have to worry about Paying Taxes
- Don't have to worry about Paying Rent or Mortgage
- Don't have to worry about Going to Work Every day to Earn a Living
- Don't have to worry about Where the Next Dollar is Coming From

- Matter of fact, you don't have to worry about going to Calvary
- Let's Just Park Here

But now, a cloud overshadows the mountain. The damp air closes in and all the world slips away into a grayness. Then the voice of God echoes around them saying, "THIS IS MY SON, THE BELOVED; LISTEN TO HIM!"

Just when the Disciples make the decision to Camp Out and Park and stay on the Mountain, God's presence and voice rings out and tells them in essence – YOU CAN'T PARK HERE!

- Kingdom work is not on the Mountaintop – But in the Valley
- Kingdom work is not in the Spiritual High of Worship – But in the Valley
- Kingdom work is not within the Four Walls of the Church – But in the Valley

Most of the time it is more comfortable to **Just Stand Still**. Standing still is not God's will. As Christians we are called to live lives that are counter to the values of the world and because of that, we push against the current of the world around us every day. But you cannot stand still. You either move forward or backwards. Standing still is not God's will.

Yes – You Can't Park Here – there is too much work to be done in the world and in our communities. We can't stay on the Mountain. Instead, we must use our experiences for rescuing lost sheep and leading them to Jesus Christ.

- We must return to the marketplace of life.
- We must go into the "HIGHWAYS AND HEDGES AND COMPEL" people to come.
- Like Christ, we must seek and save the lost.

As Peter proclaimed – IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE. It is also good for us to be here in this Sanctuary this morning -- But – You Can't Park Here.

-- We can't be satisfied with just a Sunday Morning Experience – You Can't Park Here.

- We can't have the Benediction and do nothing but return again next Sunday – You Can't Park Here.
- Let us hear the Lord and do what He has commissioned us to do.
- Let's make sure we are ABOUT OUR FATHER'S BUSINESS.
- Let us tell everyone we encounter about the GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL.
- Let's get busy, because - You Can't Park Here. Amen.