

**Sermon**  
**Epiphany 6**  
**14 February 2021**  
**Rev. David Martin, Deacon**  
**St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Albuquerque, NM**  
**2 Kings 2:1-12 and Mark 9:2-9**  
**A Little Less Talk**

In today's Old Testament Lesson, several people try to prepare Elisha for an upcoming event they fear he won't be able to handle. Elisha has the same response to all of them:

"Yes, I know; keep silent."

Elisha DOES realize Elijah will be leaving soon. His beloved mentor won't be around too much longer. But instead of bemoaning that fact, he adopts a different attitude:

"Yes, I know; keep silent."

"Yes, I know; keep silent."

A few years ago, good friends Denise and John got married at St. Michael's and All Angels Church here in Albuquerque. It was a heartfelt wedding in the middle of a Saturday afternoon in early November. The reception after the wedding was held in the New Mexican restaurant at the base of the Tram in the foothills of the Sandia Mountains. The invitation specified the reception would be held from 4:00 to about 6:30 so that all the guests could enjoy the sunset from the gorgeous location – facing due west - overlooking Albuquerque.

Some guests skipped the reception, some made an obligatory appearance and left before dinner, some ate and left immediately

This was a special night, though. The invitation had specifically stated the reception was scheduled to focus on the sunset. So, there were quite a few guests hanging around longer than usual in order to see the spectacle.

And I'll have to say, New Mexico did not disappoint that evening. The sun started to set. The remaining guests who stood on the exterior deck in the late autumn chill were treated to a glorious display of reds and oranges. The sun sank behind the horizon. We went back inside and most everyone left.

Now you can read into this anything you like, but I wasn't ready to leave yet....mainly because I was finishing a margarita. The only wedding members left in the restaurant as the place opened for dinner to the public were the newly married couple, Denise and John, our good friends Sarah and Doug, and my husband and me. We looked out the huge picture windows and saw that the sunset wasn't finished. A bank of clouds was hovering above. And even though the sun had disappeared behind the horizon, the light streaming from it hit that cloud bank and created one of

the most gorgeous sunsets I have ever seen! It was magnificent. And it lasted for about 15 more minutes! In my mind it was unprecedented!

The six of us who remained returned to the deck. Without exchanging a word, we marveled at the beauty of creation – an incredible and long-lasting explosion of color....and seemingly all to celebrate Denise and John getting married.

Yes. I know. Keep silent.

There were no words exchanged for a long time. There was nothing that could be said which could enhance the experience.

Yes. I know. Keep silent.

Every year on the last Sunday of Epiphany, that's today...before we enter into the season of Lent.... we hear about the Transfiguration of Jesus. The story appears in all the synoptic Gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It seems so mystical....so important.... it's daunting to preach on. What is the Transfiguration all about? What did it mean? What did it prove? What is the take-away lesson for us today?

But I wonder if the Transfiguration can't just be the Transfiguration. Do we need to dig and dig and dig into the story to find out what Jesus wants us to know about it? Maybe, to use a common phrase, "it is what it is."

There was a glorious moment. Three of Jesus' friends were with him on a mountain. Suddenly Jesus gleamed with brilliance. In the gospels of Mark and Luke, we hear that Jesus' clothes were bright – brighter than even if they had been bleached! Matthew tells us his face shone like the sun. What an amazing sight that must have been.

Yes. I know. Keep silent.

And then Moses and Elijah appeared as well! Can you imagine? There was Moses, representing the law – and Elijah – representing the prophets....and Jesus, God incarnate representing the new commandment. What an exciting group of people to assemble in one place.

Yes. I know. Keep silent.

But it wasn't over yet. A cloud came into the sky, that cloud opened up, and God's voice declared "This is my Son. The Beloved. Listen to him."

Yes. I know. Keep silent.

I've got another wedding story. A couple of years after the marriage of Denise and John, we went to a wedding at the Balloon Festival Museum here in Albuquerque. The guests gathered in their folding chairs, the chuppah was set up, and the couple walked down the aisle. The rabbi said an opening prayer and then offered this greeting.

“God has blessed us with many gifts. One of the most precious gifts is the gift of memory. I strongly encourage all of you here to put down your phones. There are professionals taking photographs and video. Be present here with us in the moment.”

Perhaps we too often feel the need to capture a moment somehow instead of actually living IN that moment. We seem to want to keep it frozen on film or pixels so we can dissect it in the future. But why? Do we need to analyze everything? Can't we just be happy living in the moment of something wonderful?

At Denise and John's wedding reception one of us may have been tempted to try and capture that gorgeous sunset on our cameras. But we knew it would never look the same as it did there.... live....in person. And no words we could have added at that moment would have truly enhanced the beauty we were seeing.

Yes. I know. Keep silent.

The rabbi reminded everyone at the other wedding to be there.... live....in person. Experience the moment. Be present.

Yes. I know. Keep silent.

In the Gospel, at the Transfiguration, Peter wanted to build three shelters – one each for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. Peter probably wanted to do this to get those guys to stick around – together – for a while. He wanted that moment in time to last for longer than it actually did. But if Peter had been busy building those booths, he would have missed the glory of the Transfiguration.

Yes. I know. Keep silent.

Instead of trying to dissect the Transfiguration, maybe we are just meant to be amazed at the glory of it all. Jesus – flanked by Moses and Elijah, the law and the prophets – shines like the sun! And God's voice comes from a cloud, announces Jesus is his son, his beloved...and God instructs us to listen to him.

God didn't say, this is a miracle happening here folks so you better videotape it, film it, write down every detail, share it on Facebook and Instagram, Tweet about it, make a limited run series and stream it on Netflix. No.... the task was to take it in and listen to Jesus. Be present in the moment. Pay attention to what is going on....and listen.

Yes. I know. Keep silent.

How can we listen to Jesus if we are so busy trying to figure him out? IS there is anything to figure out. In today's Gospel perhaps we've been told all we need to know. Jesus is the son of God. The beloved. Listen to him.

And how can we listen to him if we don't keep silent? It's impossible to listen if we are talking and sharing and tweeting and texting.

As Jesus was descending the mountains with his friends, he told them not to tell anyone about what had happened until he had risen from the dead. There is always much discussion about why Jesus asked the disciples to keep quiet about what was really going on with him. Maybe, Jesus was encouraging Peter, James, and John to simply savor the experience they had just witnessed.

I think today's lesson is to take in all we can and then live according to what we have experienced – an amazing sunset, the wedding of two people in love, seeing Jesus revealed in the world around us.

In order to see and hear the truth about Jesus... Peter, James, and John had to climb a mountain. They had to leave behind the cares of their daily lives – leave behind the distractions they dealt with all the time – and learn to concentrate on the moment. They had to leave the past behind for a while. They had to stop worrying about the future. They had to forget about holding onto the present moment by talking or building booths. Jesus invited them to simply be present.

Yes. I know. Keep silent.

As we prepare to begin the season of Lent this week, may I suggest a Lenten discipline of being present to the world and the people around you.

Less regret and ruminations about the past.

Less worrying and planning about the future.

Less action for the sake of being busy in the present and more... well... just taking things in.

More...

Yes. I know. Keep silent.