

Luke 9:28-36

The topics of conversation for many people these days are the Superbowl, the caucuses in Iowa and New Hampshire, and Mardi Gras. A month from now, other topics will dominate conversations. That's how it is with us. Conversation topics are fads. They change like the weather.

Not so with the topic of conversation in heaven. What do the saints and angels talk about? What is the conversation of heaven? In our text we are given an opportunity to listen in. Moses and Elijah are standing in glory with Jesus on the mountain. Heaven has opened a window there on that mountain, and Jesus' three disciples, Peter, James, and John, get a glimpse. They see, but they also hear. And so we hear with them.

Moses and Elijah are speaking with Jesus about His exodus at Jerusalem - His death and resurrection. They do not ask Jesus how the weather has been lately. They do not inquire about Caesar over in Rome, and who the next Caesar might be. They don't ask who won the Olympic games in Athens. Those in heaven do not care about such things. They speak with Jesus only of what He is about to accomplish at Jerusalem - the redemption of all sinners by His death and resurrection.

That, too, is the center of our conversation here. When you walk up this mountain each Sunday, you leave behind the conversations about sports, politics, and current events. Such topics have their beginning and their ending here on earth. But here on this mountain...and I call it a mountain, not because we are as high up here as Peter, James, and John were on the Mount of Transfiguration, but because when we come up here, we, like they did, join with the saints and angels of heaven in gathering around Christ. In our Divine Service we are nearer to heaven here than at any other time or place. Here on this mountain of God, heaven comes down to touch the earth, and Jesus is at the center...And so here on this mountain, we join in with the unending conversation of heaven. It's about Christ; what He has done for us sinners.

But for Moses and Elijah, it wasn't always that way. Back when they were walking the earth, their topic of conversation was much different. Moses did a lot of grumbling back then. He talked about how difficult it was leading God's people to the Promised Land of Canaan. He complained a lot. He whined and moaned to God: "*The burden is too heavy for me!*" he cried.

Elijah did the same. He spoke as a man who was depressed. He was fed up with the stubbornness of God's people. He sat down under a tree and told God to take his life; that he had simply had enough.

Let's ask ourselves a question...does our conversation, when we're not here on this mountain of God, resemble the conversation of heaven, or is it more like that of Moses and Elijah when they were living here on earth? Do we speak of Christ in our homes, or do we typically voice complaints about this and that, about this person and that person? In our daily conversation, do we join in with the saints and angels, or do we join with the grumblers and those who know nothing of Christ? And even if we don't whine and complain a lot, do we at least speak of Him who is our Lord?

If we claim to belong to Jesus, then shouldn't we talk about Him with those we love? If we have faith in our heart, shouldn't it express itself in how we speak? But I wonder, if we honestly consider our conversation topics lately, how often Peyton Manning and Donald Trump have taken front and center

over our Lord Jesus? It is true that people speak about those things which interest them and excite them. That's why the Superbowl is a hot topic today. What do our topics of conversation say about us; about what interests us?

It's good that we are here today on God's mountain. We can listen, not only to the saints and angels, but especially to Jesus. What is He saying? In our text, the Father tells Peter, James, and John to listen to Christ, and so must we. Jesus is speaking, on that mountain, of His death and resurrection. Why? Because of His love for you and for all sinners. He would die and rise again for you. Jesus is interested, not in the Superbowl, not in politics, but in you. You are that which excites Him. He cannot say enough about you, even if you and I don't speak much about Him.

Now the Father's voice did not tell Peter, James, and John to look at Jesus. He said, "*Listen to Him.*" They couldn't look at Him. He had transfigured His appearance. They had to shield their eyes from Jesus. And so must we. We are not allowed to look upon Jesus. His appearance is shielded from our eyes by water in the font and by bread and wine on the altar. But no sinner ever joined the saints and angels in heaven by looking at Jesus. "*Faith comes by hearing Him.*" "*Listen to Him*" says the Father.

That's why God bids us to come up here to His mountain, so that we leave the Superbowl for later today; we leave Donald, Ted, and Hillary for another time, and with the saints and angels, we gather around Jesus to listen.

His voice is not like roaring thunder. He speaks gently, yet firmly. "I forgive you all your sins," He says. Were you listening to these words of His earlier? He says them again: "I forgive you." Your God, He whose face shone like the sun in its brightness, ever so lovingly speaks to you as a father forgiving his dear child. He doesn't stand here to condemn you. "*Neither do I condemn you,*" He told the woman caught in adultery, "*go and sin no more.*" And this is what He says to you. He doesn't bring up all the times you were disobedient. He received thieving Zaccheus in mercy, and He also receives you. He does not frighten you with thoughts of perishing in hell. "*Today you will be with Me in Paradise,*" He told the repentant criminal. And this same promise He gives to you in your Baptism.

There is nothing, ever, on Jesus' heart that is more precious, of more value than you. And that's why all His words, His entire conversation, is about you and for you - to give you assurance of faith, to comfort you, to wrap you in His love.

One day we will look at Jesus. We will join Moses and Elijah, and all the saints and angels of heaven, and gaze upon His beauty. But now we open our ears to listen. And the more we listen to Him, the more our conversation will be about Him. When you leave this mountain in a few minutes, you don't leave your Lord; you don't leave your faith behind. You take these with you. And you also take with you the unending conversation of heaven. In this way, your homes become little mountains of God where, yes, you speak of many things in life - sports, politics, and what have you - but Christ Jesus is always at the center. Amen.