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“Do You Really Know Jesus?” Mark 9:2-9

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If you could trade places with any one person in the Bible, whom would you choose? I was asked this intriguing question once. My answer definitely wouldn't be Noah (too many animals to clean up after), or Abraham (fathering a child at age 99), or Jonah (three days in a fish's belly).

My answer would be one of the twelve disciples. I really envy those twelve men. They didn't just read about Jesus in a book, like we do; or worship him and pray to him unseen. The twelve disciples knew Jesus first-hand! They shared meals and hung out with him every day. They traveled and worked with Jesus full-time. They had the rare privilege to get to know Jesus more closely and intimately than anyone.

But guess what? Today's Bible story, from Mark chapter 9, shows us that even the disciples had a lot yet to learn about Jesus. Let's look closer at this story, and see how it applies to us, too.

²After six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.

Now, these disciples had seen some evidence of Christ's divine power, as he healed people, walked on water, and did all sorts of miracles. But the disciples had never seen or experienced the over-the-top, completely awesome Jesus that appeared before their eyes up on that mountain.

Suddenly, he was shining with an unearthly light, glowing before them, transfigured, his appearance changed. Now they were seeing a whole new, mind-blowing, unmistakably godlike dimension to their friend and teacher, Jesus! Let's read about their reaction.

⁵And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

Why were they terrified? Well, Peter, James, and John didn't know this side of Jesus. They had spent almost three years in close company with him; but, still, they didn't fully and completely know Jesus.

I think we all are in the same boat. I think that every one of us has a lot to learn about the Savior, the Good Shepherd, the Messiah, the Lamb of God, the King of Creation, the Prince of Peace, the Alpha and the Omega, our Friend and Teacher, Jesus.

My parents started teaching me about Jesus when I was a little child; and I've been reading about him and studying his words for fifty years. But I still don't have him figured out completely, or know him fully. Do you? His words still surprise me. Christ's will still confounds me. The depth of his love and the passion Jesus has for sinners like us still astonishes me – and, I just know, that when I finally meet Jesus face to face one day in heaven, I'm going to be totally blown away.

What's really awesome is that when we do meet Jesus face to face, he'll already know us completely. He knows you and me inside and out, even now. He knows our flaws, our failings, our good sides and our bad sides. He knows the sins that we confess before we even come to church to

confess them. And, knowing everything there is to possibly know about us, he loves us anyway. Jesus values us. Christ esteems us – poor, miserable sinners that we are -- worthy of his own life given on the cross.

Jesus knows you. And now he wants for you to get to know him more and more. My simple question to you today is this. Are you doing that? Are you making that a priority in your life? Or have you plateaued, and stopped learning, stopped discovering, and stopped experiencing him?

There's so much more for us to discover about being disciples of Christ. There's so much more to understand about being faithful, cheerful stewards of Jesus, about how to be effective witnesses for Jesus, to help others come to know him, too. Getting to know Jesus is a life-long adventure, friends! Peter, James, and John, found that out, up on that mountain. And Jesus will keep revealing himself to you and me, too, in fresh, exciting, mysterious, and brand-new ways ... if you let him, if your heart is open to him.

Do you really know Jesus? Let's read the last part of our story.

⁷And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."⁸And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

The voice from the cloud – the voice of God the Father – tells us today how we can really get to know Jesus. *"This is my beloved Son,"* he says, *"Listen to him."* Listen to him!

I met with our sixth grade Confirmation students on Wednesday night, and we were talking about Communion, preparing for their First Communion celebration coming up in May. We talked about how hard it is to grasp the concept that Christ's body and blood are really present in the bread

and the wine. But then we looked at all the Bible verses, where Jesus says it is so. “This is my body. This is my blood.” We listened to his words. We read from Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, 1 Corinthians 10-11. Over and over, Jesus says it. And that’s why we believe in the real presence. We listen to Jesus, we take him at his word; and those sixth graders, on their Confirmation Day, will receive the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament, and come to know Jesus in a wonderful way.

Does that mean that the Communion wafer will start glowing with the light of heaven? Will Jesus appear bodily before them, on their First Communion day? Probably not. But, those sixth grade boys and girls – because their hearts are open to Jesus, and because they’re listening to Christ’s words with faith – will come to know and experience their Savior in a remarkable new way.

What about you? Are you getting to know Jesus more and more, too? Are you listening to his words, and hearing his voice? Do you really know Jesus?