Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Mass Study Notes for Sunday, 9-20-2015



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for **9-20-2015**. This week I just returned from watching the movie *War Room* that featured a man who was engaged in a struggle between the wisdom of God and the "wisdom" of his carnal fleshly desires. We will read about what James said about this struggle in the second reading. Later I will provide some additional insights I gleaned from the movie. Then we will learn about servant leadership in the Gospel lesson from Saint Mark where we see the disciples arguing about whom among them was the greatest.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from the Apocrypha. This body of work provides some important historical insights into the 400-year silent period just prior to the birth of Jesus. We encourage our readers to become familiar with the cultural and historical context leading up to the publishing of the New Testament.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is a continuation of the study from James but picking up in Chapter 3. The context is just after James' treatise on the power of and danger of the tongue. He calls the tongue a fire (James 3:6), a "restless evil full of deadly poison" (James 3:8). He says, "From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so" (James 3:10). The main theme of today's reading is the contrast between human wisdom and godly wisdom. As you read, take particular notes of the words and phrases that constitute each side of this spiritual battle. Especially take note of repeated words and phrases.

Note: Although the reading omitted verses 14 – 15, we included them below. This was because although verse 14 forms a conclusion to his teaching on the dangers of our speech it also provides a natural linkage to his subsequent teaching below.

Second Reading:

James 3:14 – 4:3 NAS95 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. 18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. 1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

In the reading, James contrasts the "wisdom from above" (v. 17a) with that which arise from within the human heart and results in the ungodly speech about which he just finished speaking (James 3:1-12). James calls this outpouring of sinful thought patterns of the heart "bitter jealousy and selfish ambition" and repeats it twice (vv. 14a, 16a). These sinful patterns of the heart result in "arrogance and [lying] against the truth "v. 14b-ff). They are not from God (v. 15a), but are instead of non-divine "earthly, natural, demonic" sources (v. 15b-ff). They result in "disorder and every evil thing" (v. 16). In contrast, wisdom originating from God as described verse 17 is 1. Pure, 2. Peaceable, 3. Gentle, 4. Reasonable, 5. "Full of mercy" and results in good works, 6. "Unwavering," and 7. "Without hypocrisy." It's like there are two freight trains pulling against one another in our hearts. The first is that of sinful patterns originating from within the fallen condition of our hearts with input from Satan our enemy feeding the coal into the steam heading pulling away from God. Opposing that train is another engine that is God's "wisdom from above" Who opposes all of these sinful seeds implanted into our lives. The planting of God's seed in our hearts, meaning the Word of God from the Bible, results in the fruits of righteousness and peace "v. 18).

As James continues his teaching in chapter 4 with the source of the troubles already clearly in our minds, he asks the hypothetical question, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you" (v. 1a). He answers his own question with a summary statement of the things that came before. The source of the "quarrels and conflicts among [us]" is our "pleasures that wage war in [our] members" (v. 1b). These "pleasures that wage war against our body parts" form Satan's tools to lead us to "commit murder" (v. 2b) because of following the lust in our heart (v. 2a). The war between our spirit and bodies continue and when we are "envious and cannot obtain," meaning we covet the things from others which we cannot have; we "fight and quarrel." James says that even when we pray because we want something we don't have, we "ask with wrong motives, so that [we] may spend it on [our] pleasures" (v. 3). Hidden within James teaching upon the contrasts between our

fallen human condition and godly wisdom is a principle to ask God in prayer for the things that we desire (v. 3a). We will speak more about this later.

How many of us can identify with the ongoing struggle between our flesh and the devil's ways that rage in our hearts? In this section, James closely links our speech with the revelation of the secret battles that rages within us. Our ungodly speech provides an insight into the ways in which we are walking in opposition to the plan that God has for our lives. God said, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). I remember once I was talking to a friend of mine and as men have a habit of doing the subject moved to women. He made a statement about engaging in a certain specific form of carnal behavior with a woman. In my heart, I knew immediately that because of his current life situation he had been engaging in viewing pornography. Pornography is one of Satan's key ways in which he pours ungodly wisdom into the lives of people, be they unbelievers like my friend, or believers who know better. Engaging in the viewing of pornography is a channel through which flows the "wisdom" of our enemy. God stands ready to deliver us from our temptations, and as James said, all we have to do is to ask Him (v. 3a).

I mentioned in the introduction that I had just returned from watching the movie *War Room*. This Christian movie providing a powerful illustration to the power of and necessity of prayer for couples as they engage in the unseen spiritual battle surrounding their lives. The movie told the story of a young mother met an older woman who mentored her about the power of prayer. Once this young woman began honestly seeking God by honoring Him in prayer huge things began to her in her life as well as that of her husband. James said in verse 3 of the reading, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures." We need to ask the question, do we even ask? Regardless of our motives, we need to regularly assess whether we are honestly praying for the important things in our lives, such as our mate, children, and the lost people whom God has brought into our lives.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel lesson continues from Saint Mark but moves ahead from 8:35 where we ended last week and picks up with Chapter 9 just after the story of Jesus' transfiguration with His chosen subset of disciples consisting of Peter, James, and John. In between, Jesus had healed a demon possessed boy (Mark 9:16-27). This miracle was unique because someone in the crowd had presented the boy to Jesus after the disciples could not heal him (Mark 9:18). Afterwards, when the disciples had asked Jesus about why they could not heal him, Jesus told them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer" (Mark 8:29). Interestingly this followed the father of the boy's request to Jesus when he said, "I do believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 8:24). It was as if Mark expressed a teaching moment with the disciples that the boy's father had the courage to ask Jesus to help his unbelief, yet the disciples were unable to heal the boy "by anything but prayer." As we saw in James, God calls us to ask Him in prayer for the things we desire (James 4:2e), yet at this stage the disciples did not yet understand the power of prayer in freeing the boy from him enslavement to the demon. Obviously, this was because Jesus was still with them, and they would understand later the powerful ministry of

prayer.

Gospel Reading:

Mark 9:30-37 NAS95 30 From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know about it. 31 For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later." 32 But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him. 33 They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. 35 Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." 36 Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, 37 "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me."

Jesus and disciples left "from there" (v. 30), meaning the event of the last healing. This would have been at the base of the mountain on which Jesus was transfigured before His disciples. The two traditional sites of this event are Mt. Tabor and Mt. Hermon. After they left "there," Jesus wanted to be alone with His disciples as we see in verse 30b, "He did not want anyone to know about it." Along the way on their journey to Galilee, after they got to Capernaum Jesus asked the disciples what they had been arguing about (v. 33c), but they refused to answer Him (v. 34). Mark tells us that they had been debating which among them was the greatest disciple (v. 34b). It's not coincidental that this argument arose after the chosen three (Peter, James, and John) experienced seeing Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. It is also possible that these three were still radiating some of God's glory after coming down from the mountain as happened with Moses. (Exodus 34:29). Perhaps this created in these disciples' minds a sense of superiority, and the others maybe wondered why they weren't chosen for the trip up the mountain. Jesus quickly corrected their misunderstanding concerning the pecking order by telling them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all" (v. 35c). Next, Jesus proceeded to provide them with an object lesson by placing a child in front of them to illustrate this principle (v. 36). Jesus used this illustration of the child to show them greatness does not consist of one's position. Even the lowest "child of the kingdom" can act as an ambassador for Jesus, and an ambassador for Jesus is one for God the Father. Therefore, the disciples shouldn't be arguing about their relative positions of greatness but should purse the kingdom with a childlike faith and humility as servants of Jesus in pointing people to God the Father.

In summary, Jesus illustrated in the story today the principle of servant leadership. Even though He told the disciples that He was going to be "delivered into the hands of men" and killed (v. 31), they persisted in arguing about whom among them was the greatest. The presence of children provided Jesus with a means of using these young people as an example of how the disciples should view themselves.

What does this mean for our lives? Regardless of our social position in society, God calls us to view ourselves as servants of the Lord Jesus. This Lord of the Universe is the same One Who washed the

feet of the disciples (John 13:12-17). Saint Paul emulated these principles of servant leadership in his ministry. He said, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4). God empowers us through His Holy Spirit to carry out the work that He has started within us (Philippians 1:6). As we go about the week, let's keep these principles in mind when we are tempted to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think (Romans 12:3).

God continues to teach me about my sinful pride and how I have often viewed myself as superior to others. This week I was mowing my lawn using my large zero turn lawn mower while my neighbor was mowing his using an older riding type mower with a missing hood and various Band-Aids holding it together. The background of this particular neighbor is that he is some two decades younger than his wife who moved in a few years ago with her first husband and two kids. However, something happened between them and she later married the much younger "boy" who was not out mowing her lawn. As I was contemplating the matter as I zoomed past him on my tiger-striped racing machine I admit that I felt superior to him as he mowed with the broken down junk that was handed down to him from the neighbor's former husband. In an attempt to get a handle on my pride I actually found myself saying, "When I was his age (i.e. riding a bike with training wheels), I would have been glad to have had a mower as nice as that." How's that for getting a handle on my pride! In reality, God calls me to be the servant even of my boyish neighbor who also needs to hear the message of the Gospel. In retrospect, what I can do in the future is to pray for him as I see him mowing his lawn, and even pray for an opportunity to build a bridge to him in order to be able to share the hope that I have through faith in Jesus Christ.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. All of us have heard the expression, "put your foot in your mouth." Jesus said in Luke's Gospel, "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart" (Luke 6:45). From what you learned from the second reading today, reflect upon the last time which you put your foot in your mouth. What was the underlying condition that brought about this action? Through God's wisdom in the Bible, what are one or two ways that you can avoid this in the future?

2. The super disciples including Peter, James, and John had every right to view themselves as being in a privileged position since they were the only ones invited to the travel up the mountain with Jesus and subsequently experienced His transfiguration. In what ways are you tempted to view yourself as being in an exalted position either in society or in the church? Using what you learned from the Gospel lesson how does what you know about Jesus' view of leadership change your view?

Readings for the Week

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Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site:

http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/092015.cfm

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 3-16-2014



Welcome back to the Mass Notes for 3-16-2014. This week we return to Genesis, the first Book in the Bible to see God's unconditional promise of blessing on Abram, whose name God later changed to the more familiar Abraham. Then we will study Saint Paul's Second Letter to Timothy and conclude with the Gospel lesson from Matthew 17 in which we will see Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain.

Let's step back for a moment and talk about how we go about studying the readings each week in order to give you some insights into our method. When we study the readings we use the following procedure counting down from the letter "C" in the alphabet: **C**ontext, **B**ig Idea, and **A**pplication. First, we examine the context of the passage in light of the surrounding passages (the textual

context) along with the historical information (the historical context). Second, we determine the theological big idea that emerged from the study of the text. What was God saying to the people in the original context, and what theological principles can we extract from the text? Finally, we determine the contemporary application(s) – what does it mean to us today? As we move through the readings each week try and see what theological big ideas you can garner from the text and how these could then be applied to your life. As you focus upon the **A**pplication, first pray that God would reveal to you what He would have you do with what you learned. You may be amazed at how God sheds light differently on each passage as you encounter and study it again in the liturgical cycle over the years. Perhaps you will find, as my wife likes to say, that you have been ruined for the ordinary!

The first reading is from Genesis Chapter 12. The context of this section was just after Abram, who later became Abraham the Father of all believers, left with his father Terah from his birthplace in the region called "Ur of the Chaldeans" and settled in Haran (Genesis 11:31). These were the circumstances leading up to God's call of Abram. Looking at the bigger picture, Noah's Flood was in the somewhat distant history, and he had died back in Chapter 9 (v. 28). The era of the city building had begun under Nimrod (10:8), beginning with the city of Babel (10:10). Chapter 10 contained what was called the "Table of Nations" that represented the nations that developed after Noah and his sons departed from the ark. "These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood" (v. 32, emphasis added). The division (or "separated in some versions) happened at the Tower of Babel where God acted to confuse the languages of the nation states for several reasons including their idolatry and unwillingness to spread out and populate the earth (9:1, 11:4). "They said, 'Come, let **us** build for **ourselves** a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let **us** make for **ourselves** a name, otherwise **we** will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth'" (Genesis 11:4, emphasis added). Many Bible commentators agree that the tower spoken of in verse 12 was a "ziggurat," which was a tall structure associated with the worship of pagan deities. Notice that the focus of the people's efforts was upon themselves (see the five bolded words in the text), rather than upon God's commandment to spread out and populate the earth. As we will see later in the Gospel lesson, they were not setting their mind on God's interests, but on man's, something which Jesus called Satanic (Matthew 16:23). We must remember that God cautions us against building shrines, regardless of the purity of our intentions. Otherwise these shrines, or towers, ziggurats, may become stumbling stones in serving God.

With this context in mind let's read the text. Note that as you read about God's promises to Abram, who was later renamed "Abraham," see if you can uncover the theological **b**ig ideas in the text.

> *1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; 2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." 4 So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.*

(Genesis 12:1-4 NAS95)

This account is the first recorded encounter of God's call to Abram, which was a call to bless him. We don't know how the LORD communicated with Abram, but it seems very clear that Abram understood and immediately obeyed (v. 4). While this call would be one of blessing, it required some sacrifice on Abram's part. He had to leave his country, his relatives and his father's house. The progression goes from more general to very specific. God did not give him the GPS coordinates of the destination; He just told him that He would show Abram the land when he got there. How's that for literally walking by faith? That is why Abram is called the father of faith, since he had the unique privilege of becoming the father of a great nation that was called to walk by faith in God, as a unique light and blessing to the other nations on earth. God's blessing included not only making him into a great nation, but also making Abram's name great. The promise was that Abram would be a blessing to other people groups.

In verses 2 – 3 we see an unconditional blessing of Abraham and all of the future Jews as well. "And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." Notice the warning that God gave to those who won't bless the Jews. "And the one who curses you I will curse" (v.3b). It's impossible to understand all of the implications of this timeless principle. Although we may not understand how God will deal with those who have harmed the Jews, we can rest assured that God will hold true to His unconditional promises to both bless those who bless the Jews and curse those who curse them.

God called Abram to make a great sacrifice in leaving his country, his relatives and his father's house. Is God calling you to leave some area of comfort to you? Is it possible that we are drawing our personal identity from our country, our relatives or our father's house? Whatever the case may be, God calls each of us to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Romans 4:3 says that Abram believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. So this text helps us to understand what pleases God's heart. Our belief in who He says He is and our willingness to walk by faith is what God is looking for in each of our lives.

As we move into the second reading, ponder for a moment how God speaks to us in the present day in order to call us to take certain actions for Him. In the first reading God spoke to Abram through a clear and specific call. The author of the Book of Hebrews provided some insights into how God spoke in the past and how He speaks to us today. "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world" (Hebrews 1:1-2). God's final method of communication to His people is through the words and life of His Son Jesus. As you read from Saint Paul's Second Letter to Timothy notice how throughout this letter, and in all of his letters, Paul's central focus in on the good news of Jesus – the Gospel.

> *8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and*

> *called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, 10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, (2 Timothy 1:8-10)*

Paul reminded us not be ashamed of suffering for the good news of the Gospel, Jesus' eternal ministry, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). God saved us not because of our works, said Paul, but for His divine purposes (Titus 3:5). This reminds us of Paul's teaching to the Ephesians. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10). We can celebrate that when we believe in God's promises through Jesus we have obtained immortality (v. 10b). In the same way that Abram listened to God, we are to listen to Him through the Gospel. You can see why Paul was not ashamed of this good news! We, as well, can learn from Paul's example. Even though the world around us wants us to feel timid about our faith, we of all people can be assured that the free gift of eternal life is something to be excited about. There are people in your life who need to hear this good news, not only from your words, but from your transformed life.

As we move onto the Gospel lesson, we will see the importance of first listening to God, even when we feel that we need to take immediate actions. The Gospel lesson today is from Matthew Chapter 17. The context was just after Peter proclaimed to Jesus under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah of God (Matthew 16:16). Jesus then revealed to His disciples that He would be handed over to the elders, chief priests and scribes, and be killed then raised up on the third day (v.21). Peter responded to this information by immediately and impulsively responding to Jesus by saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You" (v. 222b) to which Jesus said, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's" (v.23). Peter was a man of action, and Jesus reprimanded him for attempting to take matters into his hands rather than allowing God to accomplish His divine plan through Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection.

Read the Gospel account of what is known as the "transfiguration" of Jesus in which we see a glimpse of God's glory revealed through the Person of Jesus Christ.

> *1 Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. 2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. 7 And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid." 8 And*

> *lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone. 9 As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead" (Matthew 17:1-9).*

The central focus of the passage was the Father revealing Jesus' glory as God in the flesh. He chose to reveal Jesus' true identity to a subset of Jesus' disciples. It's significant that Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him to the mountain. Peter, formerly a fisherman named Simon, was the foremost of the disciples, since every time that he is mentioned along with a list of disciples he is always listed first. Simon Peter was a man of action, as he is the one that cut off the ear of the high priest's servant when the mob came to arrest Jesus on the evening before His crucifixion (John 18:10). Peter became a leader of the church among the Jews, as Paul became a leader of the church to the Gentiles. James and John, known as the Sons of Thunder (Mark 3:17), were also significant in their influence in the early church. James (known as James the Greater) was the first martyr among the disciples. James, along with his brother John, were known for their zeal and energy for their ministry with the Lord. Together with Peter, James and John formed the triad of disciples who shared special privileges with the Lord Jesus. These privileged three men were chosen by God to be the first ones to experience the glory of Jesus.

As we move deeper into the text, notice that the passage centered around the Father's message to Jesus' disciples. This contains an important hint as to the theological big idea of the text. God the Father said, "**This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!** (v. 5d). Throughout Matthew's Gospel Jesus had explained to His disciples the nature of the coming kingdom. He said in the previous chapter that His kingdom would not come until after the Jewish religious authorities had Him killed and He was raised up on the third day (Matthew 16:21). What God the Father was saying boiled down to something like this:

> "Jesus is telling you about His Kingdom. You have different ideas, like setting up your own shrines and bringing in the kingdom through your own efforts, but you need to listen to Him for the truth about how it must play out according to the plan foreordained from before the beginning of time."

Which of us would not have wanted to have responded in a similar way as Peter? I remember an incident that happened between me and my wife that helps to shed some light on how Peter acted impulsively during the transfiguration incident from the Gospel lesson. Just after we got married, my wife and I had gone out to a quiet dinner at a local restaurant in a lakeshore community in a nearby town. As we settled down to eat, my wife's cell phone rang. It was bad news. After she hung up the call, I sprang into action with a five-point plan on how we would overcome this obstacle and how we should proceed. As I moved onto the next four points, the first hint that I had that she wasn't receiving my plan very well was a slight tremor that began in her upper lip. "That's strange," I thought, "was she feeling ill, was it something in the soup that was causing this shake?" Soon the small tremor advanced until her whole body began shaking and then an all-out cry began! What had I done wrong, I was only trying to help? What my wife needed at that moment was just for me to be with her, hold her, and to listen.

My story about the need for me to just shut up and listen is similar to what happened to Peter when he responded impulsively to Jesus during the transfiguration experience. God the father responded to Peter's three-point plan by saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him" (v.5c). Peter, though well intentioned, simply needed to listen to God. When we are confronted with the glory of our Lord Jesus and the love of the Father for Him (which by the way is the same love Jesus has for us based on John 15:9), the appropriate response is to surrender our whole lives to God. Sometimes we just need to listen to God and not feel the need to respond with our own three-point plan.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. In what ways is God calling you to walk by faith? How are the examples of Abram and Paul helpful to you?
2. Does the fact that salvation comes by grace and not by works sound like good news to you? When we accept this free gift from God, we are exercising faith. How is faith necessary for salvation to be imparted to us? How are you exercising faith in God's grace and not putting your faith in your own good works to bring you eternal life?
3. Jesus' true identity as God was revealed at the transfiguration. His face was radiant, shining like the sun. How can a vision of Jesus' true identity spur you on in your everyday life? What would need to change in your life in order to obey God's voice and "listen to Him"?

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/031614.cfm

First Reading GN 12:1-4A (plus extra verses for context)

Genesis 12:1-4 NAS95 1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; 2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." 4 So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Second Reading 2 TIM 1:8B-10

2 Timothy 1:8-10 NAS95 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, 10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior

Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

Gospel Reading MT 17:1-9

Matthew 17:1-9 NAS95 1 Six days later Jesus *took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and *led them up on a high mountain by themselves. 2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. 7 And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid." 8 And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone. 9 As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead."

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB