

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. 2And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. 3Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" 6When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. 7But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." 8And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. 9As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

I can hear her voice even now. My sister Kay – three years older than I was left in charge of her three younger siblings. One or two or three of us were up to something Kay didn't like – and then she spoke the words of ultimate authority, Mom said..... followed by any number of quotes: Mom said, I was in charge. Mom said you can't wrestle while she's gone. Mom said you have to stay out of the cookies. Mom said.

Today in America the argument may go like this – the founding fathers intended. World opinion says. Or the Bill of Rights says. The courts say, The congress says. Authority comes from something, from someone, from somewhere.

When Jesus was walking the roads of Galilee, calling disciples, healing and teaching, Herod was king. Roman law was the legal authority. Roman soldiers enforced that authority. But the descendents of Jacob knew that the true authority was the Lord. The Lord had given the Ten Commandments through Moses more than twelve centuries earlier. God had spoken through the prophets – especially Elijah who opposed Queen Jezebel,

wife of Israel's King Ahab, more than eight centuries earlier. The law that Moses brought down from the holy mountain, the deeds of Elijah and words of the other prophets held authority in Jesus' time.

When Jesus taught on a mountain he said, "You have heard it was said to the men of old, you shall not murder, and whoever murders shall be liable to judgement. But I say to you, that if you are angry with a brother or sister you will be liable to judgement." Moses was the authority Jesus was correcting in reinterpreting the Ten Commandments. Now that had to raise the question in many minds – does Jesus have authority to do that? Was it not the Lord who carved that law into tablets of stone? How could there ever be any reinterpretation?

Jesus took Peter and James and John up a very high mountain. His appearance changed right before their eyes. He glowed with heavenly light – his face shining like the sun. Then they saw Moses and Elijah with Jesus, talking. Suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples looked up they saw no one but Jesus himself alone.

"This is my Son, listen to him". The almighty Lord was speaking, creator of heaven and earth speaking. "This is my Son, listen to him."

On another mountain on another day when the resurrected Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples, Jesus began his instructions with these words: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

All authority.

Jesus' authority is greater than everything Moses was given by God. So when Jesus' disciples broke the Third Commandment – when they did the work of harvesting on the Sabbath which the Third Commandment forbids – Jesus said it was okay – he declares he is Lord even of the Sabbath.

Jesus' authority was not only greater than Moses' authority, but also greater than the authority of Elijah, greater than the authority of all the prophets. Moses and Elijah disappeared - the disciples saw no except Jesus alone.

Now is all of that ancient history for us? Or would the Lord take us up Mount Rushmore today and make George and Tom and Abe and Teddy disappear as the voice would say, “This is my Son, listen to him.”

Would God take us to Hollywood right into the studios – to Nashville – to Wall street – to the White House and Capital Hill – to Geneva – even to ELCA headquarters – the Vatican in Rome – in every place would the voice still speak out, “This is my Son – listen to him”?

And what does he say? “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

But what about Moses, Elijah, the Founding Fathers, the pastor, the bishop, the Pope? Listen to Jesus.

With your heart and your life listen to the one who did not curse his enemies but prayed for them. Listen to the one who had higher regard for a widow’s two pennies than for the thousands put in by the rich. Listen to the one who did not leave the crowd hungry but who took what there was and gave it to all. Listen to the one who did not defend himself but who trusted in his Father in heaven.

“This is my Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him.”

And remember his promise, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

I am with you always. Listen.