

“FaceTime with Jesus”

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First Presbyterian Church
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**New Testament Lesson: Luke 9:28-36
Old Testament Lesson: Exodus 34:29-32**

How many of you here have an iPhone? Do you know what “FaceTime” is? Do you know the story behind it?

In June of 2010, Steve Jobs, founder of Apple computers, stood on stage in a huge auditorium as cheers went up from thousands of tech devotees gathered there for the latest and greatest.

Jobs was introducing the iPhone 4. One by one, Jobs demonstrated each of the phone's many features, projecting images from the face of the phone onto the giant screen behind him. Each new or improved feature brought applause.

And then reaching for his iPhone again, Jobs said, “There’s one more thing,” and the auditorium erupted with applause. The audience knew something big was coming. Giant letters appeared on the screen behind him, echoing his words: “One more thing”

An image of his iPhone appeared on the screen, so the audience could watch what he was doing in real time. He touched a button called “FaceTime,” and instantly his own face appeared on the cell phone, both in his hand and projected up on the giant screen. Jobs touched another button and another man’s face appeared, and the picture of Jobs shrank to a small box on the lower left. Then the two men began talking to one another – face to face over the phone even though the other man was in another part of the world. That’s FaceTime, and the crowd just went wild! It’s like Skype for an iPhone.

It was futuristic in 2010 and for some of us it is still futuristic – having a face-to-face video call over a handheld phone. I’ve not done it yet, but maybe one day in the not-too distant future...! There’s just something about having a face-to-face conversation with someone that makes all the difference in the world.

Today, in our New Testament reading, Jesus has a face-to-face conversation with two someones – Moses and Elijah. Moses is the lawgiver and Elijah is a prophet. We’ve got the embodiment of the law and the embodiment of the prophets meeting with the embodiment of the Gospel. Now that’s pretty cool! Let’s see the smart phone top that! It’s pretty cool, and it’s pretty special.

We know this is a special encounter by what we heard in the Bible today where it says, “... While (Jesus) was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.” It’s interesting that, first, Jesus’ appearance changed, and then Moses and Elijah showed up. As Luke puts it, “Suddenly (the Apostles with Jesus) saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to (Jesus).”

They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

This is how the Gospel works. First Jesus shows up and then others are attracted to come and see him, to be with him. And like we saw with the Apostles were there to witness all this, there is almost always someone on the fringes of any encounter with Jesus looking in.

Whenever someone is interacting with Jesus out in the open, there is the possibility and the hope that other people we see this and be affected by it, be drawn to it, drawn to him, to Jesus!

Let’s say you’re at the grocery store and someone needs help getting a product off the shelf – I saw that happen just other week and it was touching. She asked this total stranger stopped to help her.

Now I don’t know whether that was “a Jesus thing” for them or not. But for me, it was a reminder of us being brothers and sisters in Christ. And wouldn’t it have been great if one of those two, either the helper or the one being helped, had tied it back to his or her relationship with Jesus? Just a simple “God bless” or “it’s the Lord’s work” or something like that – who knows where that could lead!?! Maybe all the way up the mountain to meet Jesus face to face, spiritually, in that interaction between two strangers.

An encounter with Jesus makes all the difference in the world. For Peter, John and James with Jesus on the mountain that day, it made all the difference in the world – and beyond. While they were up there, “a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, ‘This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!’ When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.”

In those days, they told no one. That was true while Jesus was still on earth with them, while his time had not yet come. But then as he prepared to leave them, Jesus sent those very same apostles with two instructions; God said listen to him, and Jesus, “Do this, in remembrance of me,” and “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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Just two instructions from the Lord: remember him and make disciples.

Jesus is with us, right now, encouraging us to remember him and telling us to make disciples, to share the Gospel. If we are not doing that out there, what are we doing in here!?!

I know this “Christianity stuff” is not easy. But it is clear, to some extent. It is clear that we are to remember Jesus and share him with others. And I know you all do that, to some extent. I know that you live your lives the way you do because Jesus is in you and he’s just dying to get out.

We can't contain him! None of us who know Jesus in our heart of hearts can help but have Jesus shine through – we can't help it! And that's a good thing. When Jesus makes an appearance, others notice, to some extent or another. The question is whether the extent to which we share Jesus with others is enough? And of course it's not. You can never share enough Jesus with another person.

The only limitation there is in sharing Jesus is ours – our limited courage to say “God bless you” or “it's the Lord's work” or “have you prayed about that” or “if you ever want to talk, I'm here for you” or “you know, I've been there, too, and what really helped me was thinking about it in terms of what I know about Jesus.

Have you thought about Jesus in all of this? If not, I'd be happy to help you.” That's scary stuff. Saying anyone of those things to someone else takes courage, some more than others. Can you imagine it-saying something about Jesus out there and then tying it to your presence in here! How about if we just start with a simple “God bless” or “it's the Lord's work,” and then work our way up to going deeper in sharing Jesus and his blessings with others. The thing we've just got to do in remembering Jesus and making disciples of all people is share Jesus with one another, maybe a little at first, but then more and more.

When we receive Communion today, we receive Jesus in our hearts. When you leave here today, don't leave Jesus behind. You are encountering Jesus in Communion here today, and in worship every Sunday. Take him with you when you leave. Share him with someone you meet this week. Do it purposefully. Do it courageously. Do it more openly than you've ever done it before.

What do we have to loose? Nothing really, except our fear and our self consciousness and our nervousness and our stubbornness. And what do you have to gain? Everything! We can be at the center of the most unimaginable blessings just by letting Jesus shine through this week in the things we say and do. And I mean really shine through.

But for that to happen, we have to push ourselves a bit. We have to be bold about it. We have to believe that when we share Jesus more boldly, we won't be sorry, you won't be sorry. We don't always see the seeds of faith that we plant take root, grow up, and blossom. But we have the assurance that they will, we have the assurance of Jesus.

And for us Christians, that will have to be enough. It is enough. As Christians, each of us can stand confident alongside Jesus this week, share the faith like you've never shared the faith before, and then trust in that faith, knowing that Jesus will do the rest, Jesus will bring glory to that encounter. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

Celebration, joy, hope! These are the gifts you give to us, Jesus.

You turn our mourning into dancing, you take our ashes and transform them into beauty.

Thank you, Jesus.

Help us to come to you, not only when we are sorrowful, but also when we are celebrating.

You desire to rejoice with us; for you are the reason we can celebrate.

For the sunshine, the rain, the mountains, the seas; for our children, our friends, our homes and the air we breathe – we are grateful for all this and more, for all that you give to us this day and everyday.

Thank you, Jesus, for all that you give and all that you promise. It is to you we raise our voices in prayer as you taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts as we
forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil,
For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever.
Amen.**