

It starts in silence. Silence isn't what the thirteen of you do. Even in the beginning you weren't quiet, when everything was new and none of you knew what you were doing. Not like you really know what you're doing now either. But still, usually the treks between towns were filled with the sometimes quiet, sometimes raucous cacophony of conversation, laughter, and subtle teaching moments, now there's nothing. A weight, as heavy as lead, seems to have sunk over you, your family, your life. Communication happens more in sidelong glances and shrugs of shoulders, of head nods and adamant silent refusals. Something has shifted. Not something. Everything. Everything has shifted and you know why, and yet you don't want to know why because you don't want this to have been your fault and you don't want what he said to have been true.

This isn't what you had signed up for. That day along the shores of the sea. You can still feel the rough tangle of fish nets between your fingers as they fell to the ground and your steps shifted from the waves to the solid path behind his footsteps. Little did you know then that this path would be shakier than any storm tossed boat you had ever been in. You thought you understand, that this all made sense, that this was going to make sense. You thought you knew who he was. You *told* him so. And that's when it all went wrong. You spoke up. You spoke out. Something that he seemed to

always appreciate about you and then it all fell apart. Collapsed into this gaping maw of silence. And no one is comfortable. Even James and John and their casual ease, their tendency to banter and ridiculousness have been silenced. Even Andrew, your brother, your ride or die, your *family* doesn't know what to say to make this better. There is nothing but the silence.

There is nothing but the silence for six days. Six long days. Until...until he finally speaks. We're going up the mountain. Not all of us. Just some of us. James, John, him, and me. I don't know why me. Not after the mess up, the blow up, the silence. But there he is, in front of me, saying, Peter, we're going up the mountain, and what else am I supposed to do but follow? It's the same today as it was that first day. He says follow me and I can do nothing but go, because he is my friend, he is my family, his is my Messiah, even if after the last six days, I have no idea what that means. But maybe... maybe up on this mountain, everything will become clear again...

Time is a funny thing in Mark. Mark isn't interested in prolonging anything, dragging anything out for the sake of a good story. No, Mark is the Dragnet of the gospel writers, just the facts, ma'am. There is no fluff, nothing extra, nothing unnecessary. Everything in Mark happens *immediately*, one thing after another, with no time to pause or wait or let things linger, and so this tiny little phrase at the beginning of our gospel

screams a little bit that something weird is going on. Mark doesn't wait days to pick up his story, Mark doesn't let things linger, he just moves on. New story, next thing. Except today. Today, he makes a point of saying that it's been *six days*...six days have elapsed before Jesus takes James, John, and Peter up the mountain for what is not only going to be the Transfiguration, but quite literally their come to Jesus moment.

So, why is that important? What happened six days ago? Six days ago, Jesus and Peter got into the biggest knockdown, drag out fight that exists in the gospels. Six days ago, Peter took a leap of faith and declared that Jesus was the Messiah. He finally spoke his truth, what he believed. Six days ago, for the first time, Jesus laid all his cards out on the table and told the disciples what was going to happen to him. That this didn't have as neat and happy of an ending as they might have anticipated. This ended in death, albeit death *and* resurrection, but it doesn't take the whole death part off the table. Six days ago, Peter pulled Jesus aside and gave him a piece of his mind about just what he thought about that plan. That it couldn't happen. That that plan made no sense in light of what Peter just said about him being the Messiah. Six days ago, Jesus looked at Peter and called him Satan, and told him he didn't get it, that he didn't understand, that he wasn't focusing on the right things. And then what? Nothing... Mark who usually

jumps from story to story is absolutely silent about what happens over the next six days. The narrative is left hanging on this fight until Jesus grabs Peter, along with James and John and drags them up a mountain, because maybe Jesus realizes it's time for for the silence to end, at least momentarily.

Now, God bless Peter, who is never one to stop trying. He is the one that steps into the gaping hole that has been the last six days and tries to figure out the right thing to say to fix it. He stands there in awe of what he's seeing, Jesus transfigured, Moses and Elijah with him, a clear indication that Jesus stands amongst the pillars of the prophets who changed the world and the whole course of Israelite history, and Peter finally breaks the silence, wondering if maybe he can finally get something right. Jesus, Rabbi, my teacher, it's good for us to be here. I see how important this moment is. It's eye opening. Let us do something. Let us build some tents for you, let us do something to show how much we respect you, honestly, let us do something that if you want to stay up here on this mountain the whole time, you can and you'll have some shelter. Peter scrambles through the silence like Fred Flintstone's feet underneath his car, trying desperately to find the right thing to course correct what went off the rails a week ago. Maybe if I show I care, maybe if we just stay here on the mountain together, everything will be alright, we can forget what was said, what happened, and just be still.

It's a good effort on Peter's part, but it's not his voice, it's not his breaking of the silence that truly shatters it and starts everything over again. It's not his voice that brings clarity. It's not Jesus' either. It's God's. "This is my Son, the Beloved; *listen to him.*" *Listen to him.* Not only is this confirming for Peter, James, and John who Jesus is...the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior, it's pointing them back across these six days of silence to the last thing Jesus said to them, the thing that caused this whole week of awkward. He's going to die. He's going to rise again. He is going to be a Messiah unlike anything they anticipated. God is telling them very clearly what they need to do, they need to listen to Jesus, even if what he has to say isn't exactly what you want to hear, even if doesn't mesh with what your expectations were, even if it completely breaks your heart and hurts your mind a little bit to process just what exactly he's saying.

Peter hoped to break the silence with levity and with reconciliation. An olive branch extended to heal the rift that the last six days had left, to get them back to even footing. God broke the silence confirming everything Peter didn't want to hear. Jesus' voice is what he needs to listen to, even if right now that feels like the hardest thing he could be asked to do. Peter is not one for patience, for doing as he's told, for accepting what feels unacceptable, and yet here he is. The silence has been shattered and he has

to face what lies before him, his transfigured Messiah who is destined for a cross, his own path of discipleship which just got infinitely harder.

In more ways than I think we can enumerate, we sympathize with Peter. We *know* who Jesus is. We will boldly and adamantly proclaim him as Messiah. But when push comes to shove, we are not always ones for wanting to *listen* to Jesus, not when he's saying things we don't want to hear. Not when he says things like discipleship is hard and requires taking up your own cross, bearing your own brokenness for the sake of others, and being willing to walk in places you'd rather avoid. What we would rather hear is: discipleship is easy and you can do your own thing with it. You don't have to face your own brokenness, and you can just turn a blind eye to the pain of the world, it'll be ok. We don't want to listen when Jesus talks about loving our enemies and forgiving well beyond any kind of mathematical number. What we would rather hear is: hate who you want to hate, especially people that you don't like, and ya know, if you've forgiven once, maybe twice, that's enough, you can stop now. We don't want to listen when Jesus talks about bringing release to the captives and letting the oppressed go free, about reaching out to those on the margins and seeing them, walking with them, and seeking to restore them to community. What we would rather hear is: the world will sort itself out, the world is always

going to be hard, you don't have to put in a ton of effort. The oppressed can figure it out on their own, you don't need to do the hard work of liberation, God can probably handle that without you. We don't want to listen when Jesus talks about loving your neighbor as yourself and seeking to become a servant of all. What we would rather hear is: love who you want to love, hate who you want to hate, ignore who you want to ignore, and ya know only serve where you're comfortable. Don't overtax yourself.

Sometimes, we would rather listen to days and days of gaping silence rather than to what Jesus actually has to say, because just like Peter, when we're faced with what we don't want to hear, we lash out, we freak out, and we scramble to make it more palatable. But that's not how faith, how discipleship, how life with Christ works. Jesus says hard things. And when he does God is right in our ear saying, *listen to him*. There can be no doubt that silence is easy and that discipleship is infinitely harder. Discipleship is demanding and difficult, and not always what we want to do with our time and our hearts. But I guess the question is, which would we rather, a life lived in silence, or a life lived with our Lord, who pushes us beyond the safety of mountaintops and what we want to hear, and out into a world that is in need not only of our listening ears, but our attentive hearts that are willing to be transfigured for the sake of others? **AMEN!!!**