

More than an OMO Advert

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[0 : 00] Danny says that he'll answer your questions, pertinent questions of the 21st century that relate to ethics, etiquette, and just the dilemmas that people face in life.

But rather than reading Danny Katz, perhaps you sit back between Christmas and New Year and dream one day of winning the Sydney to Hobart yacht race. Well this week in the Herald Sun on Thursday, the paper gave voice to at least part of what the skipper believes is the winning formula. You see on the deck of the race winner, Wild Oaks 11, for the duration of the whole race was an old bucket hat. It was a hat that belonged to a sailing legend.

The winning skipper was reported as saying that the hat was a good luck charm. It worked. Well, friends, what do you make of those sort of voices?

Do you believe in good luck charms? Is there such a thing as a good luck charm? Can it determine outcomes? Is this reality?

[1 : 11] But I think between this Christmas and New Year period, what really stands out are the voices of astrology. You see, the media gives saturation coverage to your 2006 stars.

Astrologer Margie Thillett predicts the highs and lows for 2006, and she does this indeed for every birth date of the year. So if you're born between April 21 and May 21, then this is what's in store for you.

Jupiter in the partnership zone guarantees good times and lucky encounters. Guarantees! That's some sort of voice, isn't it?

How many people listen to such voices? In recent days, my impression is that there's been one dominant voice.

It hasn't been the voice of Shane Warne screaming out, How's that? Over the last week, we've heard the recorded actual voice and the commentator's analysis of the voice of one of this country's most powerful media figures.

[2 : 26] Numerous times in recent days, we've had replayed an interview with Ray Martin that was recorded about eight years ago. Ray, let me tell you that there's good news news and bad news.

The good news is that there's no devil. The bad news is that there's no heaven either. Voices, voices, voices that give the impression that they're speaking with authority.

So, let me ask you, what do you make of such voices? Are they indeed authoritative? Do such voices represent reality?

What are the voices that you listen to? Because the reality is each of us listen to someone. So, as we head into a new year in 2006, let me ask you, what's the authoritative voice in your life?

This morning, we resume our sermon series from the Gospel of Mark, and we'll be looking at the first part of chapter 9, and I'd like you to turn with me to that passage.

[3 : 46] And the immediate context for our passage this morning is most important. And that context begins towards the end of chapter 8. And if you're following along in the text there, you'll see that in chapter 8, verse 27, Jesus is journeying with his disciples and he's journeying to the villages in the region, the northern region of Caesarea Philippi.

And Jesus asks his disciples this question, who do people say that I am? And they answered him, John the Baptist and others Elijah and still others one of the prophets. And Jesus asked them, but who do you say that I am?

And Peter, of course, assuming that leadership role in the group, answers, you're the Messiah. I wonder how much Peter really comprehended.

How much did he really comprehend about Jesus? How much did he really comprehend about Jesus' mission? What was Peter's understanding when he described Jesus as the Messiah?

Peter. And I want us to now look at arguably one of the most memorable incidents in the Gospels. Look at verse 2 of chapter 9.

[5 : 07] We read six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and he led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. You see, it's six days after Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ.

And after Jesus has given his first prediction of his suffering, death and resurrection, and after Jesus had asked the crowd rhetorically in verse 36 of chapter 8, what will it profit someone to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?

And it's six days after Jesus had spoken of the coming judgment. And so, after these statements, Jesus takes these three disciples, Peter, James and John.

These were the disciples that he had first called and he takes them to a high mountain. And of course, in scripture, a high mountain is the traditional place for special revelation.

We don't know exactly which mountain this was in that area. One possibility is a mountain called Mount Meron and it rises to a height of just over 1,200 metres.

[6 : 22] But it's on this mountain that Jesus is transfigured. He's transfigured before the disciples. What Jesus experiences is a physical transformation.

And it's visible to these three disciples. The transfiguration is a reminder of Jesus' pre-incarnate before he came in human flesh, of his pre-incarnate divine glory.

It's a preview of his coming exaltation. I wonder whether you're all aware of, you probably are, of the internet, the very popular internet website known as eBay.

On eBay, you can buy just about anything. Well, I was having a look at eBay this week and I noticed that on eBay you can even buy washing powder. And one lady, this is extraordinary, trying to sell her washing powder actually gives a review of the product.

And this is what she says. She says, I don't very often buy surf, but I thought I'd give it a go. Out of curiosity more than anything, she then says this would be an advertiser's dream comment.

[7 : 36] It makes sure your whites come up really white. And you won't need to wash your laundry twice. It leaves your clothes smelling fresh and it gives the outdoor freshness you want in your clothes.

And I'm really happy with surf. It's marvellous in the laundry. It makes me smell lovely and it's not harmful on the skin. Isn't that a great endorsement for surf? But friends, whether it's surf, whether it's Omo, whether it's cold power, I see on the shelves that there's even now a hurricane washing powder, indeed, even if it's a fabric bleacher, nothing could achieve what happened in addition to the transfiguration on the mountain.

Have a look at verse 3. You see, Mark records that Jesus' clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. there's no earthly explanation for what the disciples are seeing. And this white glow that's emanating from Jesus alludes to the resurrection. It alludes to the resurrection because white garments characterise the righteous in the resurrection.

And when you think about that, what a gracious teaching lesson that is by God for the disciples. You see, the disciples have just been told by Jesus that he, the Son of Man, must undergo great suffering and be killed.

[9 : 06] And they've also been told that to be a disciple of Jesus, you must deny yourself and take up your cross. And so now, just for this brief time, for this very brief time on the mountain, the disciples get this wonderful glimpse of the future.

the glorious enthronement of Jesus after the degradation of the cross. Great encouragement for the disciples because those who follow Jesus will suffer for him but they won't do so in vain.

and that's a great word of encouragement for each one of us as we head into another new year. All these disciples, they're on the mountain, they've just witnessed this extraordinary incident of the transfiguration nation.

But what I think really makes their three heads spin both individually and collectively is that now two people appear. And these two people are talking to Jesus.

I mean, who could these people be? Are they maybe just a few more of the disciples that have sort of come up in a second party up the mountain? the text tells us that that's not the case.

[10 : 33] Moses and Elijah are here. And Moses and Elijah are chatting. They're chatting with Jesus. So as readers, I think we naturally ask, what are these two great Old Testament figures doing here?

What's going on? Well, these Old Testament saints, they trigger thoughts of the coming age. You see, Moses and Elijah are eschatological figures.

Sounds a fancy word, but simply figures of the end times. Moses, of course, was Israel's first deliverer. And in Deuteronomy 18, the people expected a prophet like Moses to appear to come and liberate Israel.

But what about Elijah? Elijah was supposed to appear at the dawning of the end time. And God's ultimate redemption of Israel. Both Moses and Elijah had visions of the glory of God on a mountain. And both of them had unique endings to their earthly lives. And both Moses and Elijah at the end of the Old Testament are mentioned together.

[11:47] They're mentioned in the book of Malachi. Let me read the book from Malachi chapter 4. Remember the teaching of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

Horeb speaking of Mount Sinai. Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. He'll turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse.

Peter, who seems to always assume that leadership role, he steps forward and he responds to this amazing revelation of Moses and Elijah chatting with Jesus.

It's interesting that given what Jesus has just told Peter at the end of chapter 8 about the Son of Man who will come in glory and given that he has just witnessed this amazing transfiguration it just surprises me each time I read this how Peter addresses Jesus.

Look at the text, he says Rabbi or teacher. It's pretty clear isn't it that Peter is still on a steep learning curve and if you look at verse 6 we can deduce that Peter's mouth is running much faster than his brain.

[13:14] Let's build three shelters. Peter's missing the point and he's missing the point big time because Jesus isn't on a par with anyone else and that includes Moses and Elijah.

But in order to help these three disciples three disciples clearly who were slow to learn the voice of God thunders out from a cloud and it's a cloud that has come and overshadowed the mountain.

This is my son the beloved listen to him. I'm sure that scene on the mountain would have evoked strong images of God's appearance at different times as recorded in the Old Testament.

The cloud of God's presence over Mount Sinai itself. The cloud that filled the tabernacle. The cloud that guided the Israelites through the wilderness. The cloud of the glory of the Lord that filled Solomon's temple.

And this public declaration this is my son is the same endorsement of Jesus as at his baptism. So Peter's confession back in chapter 8 verse 29 said even more than what Peter understood.

[14:39] God the father is teaching the disciples to comprehend more fully the uniqueness of Jesus. Of course these three disciples Peter, James and John they'd been so physically close to Jesus.

They certainly regarded him as God's Messiah the divinely endowed deliverer of Israel. But it took the transfiguration for them to realize that Jesus wasn't just divinely endowed, Jesus is actually divine.

this is my son the beloved listen to him. Jesus had spoken to the disciples very plainly about his suffering and death and now God the father speaks very plainly about his son and the command is to listen to God's son to listen to Jesus Christ.

So again the question comes back what voice are you listening to? What's the voice of authority in your life as you head into 2006?

The world in which we live seeks like on a daily basis to drown out the voice of God's son.

[16:13] The world that we live in only wants to hear its own voices. Chuck Coulson was one of Richard Nixon's right hand men and of course he went to jail for his part in the Watergate scandal and it was in jail that Chuck Coulson submitted to the voice of God's son and Chuck went on and became a well-known author and in his writings he comments that the print media often intentionally distort what's written.

He comments over the years since I became a Christian I've always deliberately explained that I have accepted Jesus Christ. These words are invariably translated in the press into something like Coulson's professed religious experience.

Coulson says I discovered that one major US daily as a matter of policy will not print the two words Jesus Christ together.

They won't do it because the editor says that when they're put together when they're combined it represents an editorial judgment. government. But this attempt to silence God's son, the voice of God's son isn't limited just to the secular media.

The tragedy is that attempts are rampant to do that in many theological colleges. Founded in 1985 the so-called Jesus Seminar is a group of 70 North American scholars and they meet and they discuss the various sayings of Jesus found both in the four gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and also the Gnostic gospel of Thomas.

[18:01] And they adopt a system of voting. They vote with coloured beads and then the seminar decides the relative probability as to whether these sayings are authentic or not and then they put together a database to determine who Jesus was.

Well in their great wisdom they concluded that 85% of the gospel sayings were not spoken by Jesus. God the father thunders from heaven.

This is my son the beloved listen to him. And it's common I think for people to ask but what's God like?

And the answer is simply that God is like Jesus Christ exactly like him. and therefore if you're without Christ you're without God.

If you reject Christ you reject God. Jesus isn't just another lawgiver. He's not just another prophet.

[19:09] He's not just a divinely endowed messianic deliverer. Jesus Christ is the one the one to whom all defer.

To whom all are to defer. His voice is the one to respond and obey to. And in comparison to the voice of Jesus Christ as recorded in scripture all other voices in the world are simply clanging bells. Well Jesus and the disciples have been up on the mountain. The disciples have witnessed this amazing sight. They've heard the voice thunder from the cloud and now Jesus comes down and descends the mountain and he instructs them to tell no one about what they'd seen until the son of man had risen from the dead.

You see the task of messiahship for Jesus still lies ahead of him. And if there'd been an announcement of these extraordinary events that had taken place on the mountain I think it's easy to see that that would have fuelled the nation to think that the time had really come for national and military liberation.

Of course Jesus was on a mission of liberation. Liberation from the slavery of sin. And the path that he was to take had to take him to the cross.

[20:47] The disciples, like not all but like most of the Jews in the first century, did actually believe in the resurrection. But what the disciples clearly couldn't get their minds around was the specific resurrection of the son of man from the dead.

Have a look at verse 11. You see, in verse 11 we see that one of the voices that the disciples were still listening to was that of the scribes. The disciples are confused.

They're confused as to how could it be that the son of man rises from the dead and the coming of Elijah, which is to occur before the great and terrible day of the Lord at the end of time.

how do these two things fit together? And in verse 13 we see that Jesus responds to them and he responds with a twist.

He says to them, guys, Elijah has already come. And we know from the parallel account in the Gospels in Matthew 17 that Jesus is referring to John the Baptist.

[21:55] John the Baptist, of course, was the prophet that was sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus as Messiah. But neither the ministry of John the Baptist nor the ministry of Jesus was fully accepted.

John the Baptist, if you like, as Elijah, was imprisoned. He was imprisoned because of a grudge and he lost his head. And Jesus will be executed.

So Elijah goes before the Messiah in the way of suffering and death. There is glory.

That's certain. But it's after the cross. You may have heard of the writer and psychologist Daniel Goldman.

If you haven't heard of him, you may have heard of one of his best-selling books called Emotional Intelligence. In Emotional Intelligence, Goldman brings to public view the first real scientific insight into the emotional centres of our brains.

[23 : 04] And in this book he describes a rather simple experiment. It's an experiment with four-year-old children. So a researcher is in a room with a child and gives the child a marshmallow. And he tells the child that he has to go out for a while and if the child can wait and not eat the marshmallow when he comes back, you'll get a second one. Well, what happened? You can imagine, I guess, that some just gobble it up that quickly. Others struggle and they hold out for a few minutes and then give in. And then for some, with great perseverance, they wait for the researcher to return. children. And the research that has been done over a period of time suggests that the children who resist immediate gratification are the ones who grow up better adjusted and more dependable. You may have heard of the prosperity gospel. Prosperity gospel promising things like health and wealth for Christians now in this life today.

[24 : 16] The prosperity gospel is not biblical. There are, of course, future glories and those glories just vastly exceed what we can imagine in our minds.

But the path for the follower of Jesus Christ in this world today is the path of our Lord. It's a path of self-sacrifice. For some it will be actual physical suffering.

And it's a path of bearing one's cross. So I think as we head into a new year 2006, I need to be reminded, perhaps you need to be reminded of Paul's words in Romans 8, where he says, for those who put their trust in Christ that we are heirs, we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and then he says, if, in fact we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

The gospel writer Mark makes it very clear that glory is to come. But in the meantime, we live in a world of spiritual darkness.

We live in a world where it listens, it seems to me, it listens to any voice, but to the voice of Jesus. We live in a world that is clearly opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[25 : 51] So for us, when I say us, for those who place their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the way that we view the world, the way that we respond to the world, must reflect the reality of who Jesus is.

It must reflect the reality of his preeminence. So as we survey this year ahead, living in this just tremendous country of Australia, a country that has been so providentially blessed by God, and yet a country that increasingly embraces the ideology of pluralism, pluralism, many paths lead to God, and all of them will get there.

In our country, in our country of Australia, we need to reflect on the Father's words. The Father says, this is my son, the beloved, listen to him.

Well, how can we apply that sort of truth in our lives? We apply it by listening to the guidance of Jesus. through his word, through the scriptures, through the Bible.

We apply what Jesus said in his word to how we view the world, to how we live in the world as his disciples. And the application of that booming voice of the Father from the cloud, this is my son, listen to him, the application of that will be reflected in how we love one another in the church.

[27 : 34] this church in particular and the body of Christ in general. It's going to be reflected in how we love our next door neighbour, our friends, our work colleagues, our college students.

It's going to be reflected in how we use the gifts that the Holy Spirit has blessed us with for the building up of the body. It's going to be reflected in our concern in our daily lives for each one of us. How are we promoting the gospel? The genuine follower of Jesus Christ does have a radically changed, transformed world view.

And, friends, this is not a world view that has to be adjusted just because we've clocked over from 2005 to 2006. Calendars don't change people.

It takes the power of God to change a person like me. It takes the power of God to change each of you. And the power of God is available for anyone here this morning outside of fellowship with the living God by repenting of your sins and putting your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[28 : 53] So as we head into 2006, to me the question keeps coming back. What are the voices that you're listening to? What's the source of authority?

What guides you? What directs you in your life? Jesus Christ is the preeminent one. He is the only source of authority.

He's the only one to listen to. And God the Father declares to all people. He makes the declaration this is my son the beloved. And God the Father commands all people.

Listen to him. What I'd like us to do is just take a few minutes before I close in prayer and just in the quietness of our hearts reflect on that question of what is the voice, what are the voices that guide you, that direct you, that are the authority in your life.

Is it Jesus Christ? You see, friends, if it's not Jesus Christ, what a wonderful start to 2006, what a wonderful start to the rest of your life to have Jesus Christ as the authority in your life.

[30 : 12] You can by putting your faith and trust in him. And for those who have done that, let's just reflect then on the authority of Christ in our lives and his lordship.

Just a few moments in quietness. God, our Father, you declared just over 2,000 years ago from that cloud over that mountain in the region of Caesarea Philippi, this is my son, the beloved, listen to him.

Father, from scripture, we know as your living, eternal word, that that is still your proclamation today. This is my son, the beloved, listen to him.

Lord, I pray for anyone here who has not had the Lord Jesus Christ as the preeminent one, as the authority in their life, that this day, this first day of 2006, they would indeed repent of their sins and put their trust in the Lord.

Lord, for each one of us, may we listen to your word and may we respond to it obediently. And we ask this for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[31 : 55] Amen. Amen.