

2 Kings 2:1-12a

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

St. Mark 9:2-9

^{9:2}Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁶He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" ⁸Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

This morning's gospel lesson describes an event called "The Transfiguration." The transfiguration of our Lord is one of those events which defy description. **And it may seem to defy relevance.**

This is not the sort of thing that happens every day. Even during Jesus' ministry - the event does stand out. Jesus "was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them." That's a great story - but, because it is so far away from anything we have ever experienced, it is hard to get any meaning out of it. Any meaning for us, today. This event may have been the origination of the saying, "I guess you had to be there."

"If the transfiguration is revelation of the transcendent within the visible, the future within the present, the eternal within the moment, **then it is not very important how we interpret it**, but it is all important how it interprets us." (Walter Wink, Interpretation, 1982)

That is the value of the transfiguration for us today. Not "can we make this story 'fit' somehow into our lives and our experience?" We can't. It is not like anything that has ever been a part of our lives. But it is not to be dismissed as a fairy tale. Not to be written off as something interesting, but not going to make any difference.

This is **not** an experience we can make to fit into our lives as we already know them. **It is to be an experience that can change our lives.**

We cannot make the transfiguration fit our lives. I pray that we make our lives fit the transfiguration.

The transfiguration seems to elude us. That is because we want it to be what we're used to. If something new comes up, we figure it doesn't speak to us.

But, if we don't let God say anything **new** to us, we are not giving him much of a chance to make any difference in our lives.

It is natural to think we haven't experienced anything like the transfiguration...but I think we have. The transfiguration is a vision to Jesus and the disciples to prepare them for their mission and their ministry. It is to give them strength. To show them they are involved in a lot more than they might have suspected. The transfiguration prepares Jesus for his future and it confirms the faith of the disciples.

Anytime we have been given strength - anytime we have been prepared for a mission (even when we did not know we were being prepared) - anytime it has been shown to us that perhaps there is more to our lives than we suspected...**we have seen the transfiguration.** We have seen God shining through human flesh.

It is a good thing to remember that the transfiguration is celebrated on the last Sunday before the season of Lent begins.

Lent - when we remember the suffering and death of Jesus is preceded by this remembrance of his transfiguration. Jesus' revelation as the Son of God. It's spelled out. Jesus is God's son. It is revealed physically in the way Jesus looked; it is revealed symbolically as Moses and Elijah were with him; and it is revealed verbally as a voice from a cloud proclaims who he is.

It is no accident that we celebrate this **full revelation** of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, just before we begin a time of remembering his suffering and death. Because Lent is also the time when we look at our own lives. It is a time of repentance and trying to follow Jesus.

We need strength and assurance for our mission. So, let's begin Lent with the transfiguration. Jesus revealed as the glorious Son of God. All is well in the presence of Jesus the Christ up on the mountain. And Peter responds by wanting to build three booths and stay right up there on the mountain in the presence of the transfigured Jesus and Moses and Elijah. He says, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." (Mark goes on to point out what a poor suggestion that was by saying, "He did not know what to say; for they were terrified.")

No, you don't live your life as a Christian by staying up on a mountain in the presence of the glorious Son of God. You live your life as a Christian as you act like a disciple of Jesus Christ.

We need strength and assurance because we are called to go down off the mountain into the valley of sin and anger, and hunger, and loneliness, and boredom, and pain, and death. And we are called to bring the love of God into the **lives we live down off the mountain**. Our real lives. The way we live them every day.

If those lives don't look like the transfiguration as we know it - then let's change those lives so they do. Let's make our lives show the love of God. **Let's make the transfiguration interpret us.**

We will be strengthened for the lives we have to lead. We will be given a direction by knowing who Jesus is and how we can live our lives accordingly. Peter, James, and John had it revealed to them, in unmistakable terms. Jesus is the Son of God. **It is the same with us as it was for those disciples.**

We have been granted a vision. We know the stories of God's never ending work among his people. We've heard the sermons. We've read the Bible. We've been baptized. We've been nourished at the Lord's Supper. **We know Jesus.** We are delighted by him. We are anxious to be of service.

But when we start thinking of **how** to serve, it can be something like Peter's suggestion: "Let's just stay right where we are. I really enjoy watching this. It's amazing. We are so dedicated to this type of thing we will go to any lengths and expense to sit and watch."

The words of God himself intervene in this kind of thinking. God says, "This is my son; my Beloved, **listen** to him."

"Listen to him."

Listen to Jesus. Follow him. Do what he says. **Seeing Jesus for who he really is gives us strength to follow him.** To change our lives to conform with who he is.

The transfiguration interprets us.

We must see Jesus as truly God. We must follow him back down off the mountain into the valleys of our lives. We must bring the love of God to serve all that is around us. We don't bring God's love as some uninvolved reporters of an interesting story. We bring that love as traveling companions of Christ himself. People who have a purpose in life. Lives that are interpreted by the transfiguration.

Christ is revealed to us as the transfigured, all powerful Son of God. And knowing who he is, we turn our faces to the life we will live with him.

We turn our faces down the mountain to this coming Wednesday. It is called Ash Wednesday because of the long history of ashes and dust as symbols of our mortality and as a sign of repentance.

The season of Lent has always been a time of dedication. Dedicating ourselves to a life of discipleship. Examining ourselves to see who we really are. **How** we really are. It is a time we set aside every year to look at our lives and decide what we will do with them as servants of God.

What good is the bliss of heaven and the power of God and all the mountain top experiences we can hope for - **if they do not make a difference in our lives?** If they are not a way to live?

Exaltation and service go hand in hand. Because it is the exaltation of God that gives us the strength to love that heartbroken, hopeless world out there.

Love the world. And when you are tired, and nobody is listening, and nothing you do makes any difference - remember the shining presence of Jesus. Different than anything your life has seen anywhere else. Different from the disappointments, the anger, the pettiness.

Jesus doesn't fit the way your life is. He changes it.

The glorious transfiguration defies our interpretation and it defies our description. But that's all right. What is important is not how we interpret or describe the transfiguration, but how the transfiguration of God interprets and describes us.