

Scriptures:

2 Kings 2:1-12

Mark 9:2-9

Transfiguration Transformation

For us to completely understand (or even get a glimpse of understanding today's gospel of the transfiguration we have to back up just a little. Jesus said "Follow me," to four people who were fishing. That is how the gospel of Mark begins.

"Now in Mark 9 we have three of the original four (what happened to Andrew?) on a mountaintop, again with Jesus. There they participate in a wildly terrifying corporate vision that combines ancient past with rapidly moving present, and that also makes the identity of Jesus wild and terrifying."¹ Suddenly this rabbi they have been following becomes so much more than just a man.

The disciples must have been starting to wonder where following Jesus would lead them, and surely they were getting curious about where it would end. "It has already brought them to places they'd never been. Towns and countrysides, gatherings, healings, exorcisms, and now to this summit. Next they will head back down to ground level. What they don't know yet, though Jesus has certainly given broad—if confusing—hints, is that they are on their way to Jerusalem. To trial, persecution, and Golgotha.

That's the thing about following any path, or no path. No matter how noble the cause and wonderful the leader—even if that leader is Jesus—darkness is unavoidable. Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday, reminds us that we are dust, and to dust we shall return.

Every life, including the life of faith, leads to death. That is the eventual "where to." But all along the way there are thousands of other where-tos. Just as there are so many stops for the disciples along the road to Jerusalem, we experience stops along our inevitable journeys. Each stop is an opportunity to live faithfully, to offer justice, peace, and kindness. To look for grace. To drink in goodness and to enjoy beauty. To build bridges and relationships. To laugh and to love."²

That is likely exactly what Peter's plan was when he said to Jesus and the others "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here." "That is, in part, why Transfiguration is where it is in the church year. It is so good to be here -- to point to Jesus' acts of divinity. To witness to Jesus' revelations of who

¹ <https://melissabanesevier.wordpress.com/2018/02/05/where-to/>

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God might be. But to see where and when God's epiphanies actually impinge on our present necessities"³ as we head into Lent and Good Friday and Easter.

The whole point of the transfiguration is that it is such an epic event that in having witnessed it you can never be the same.

"What will you do with Jesus' epiphanies now that you are going into Lent? What will you do with God's revelations once you realize where they lead? What will you do with "this is my beloved child" once you realize these are God's words for you?"⁴ How do we bear witness to such an event? What does it mean for us today as we have heard Jesus say "You are my child" as we have sung together I am a child of God and now we hear the holy say of Jesus in transfigured form "This is my child." It does not make us less it connects us deeply with Jesus as we are reminded that we are chosen as he is chosen. Many may not like the lenten season because it seems so dark and we prefer to bask in the light but what I appreciate about this season is that it helps remind us that we share in the journey. Life is not solely about Easters it is about journeys and sometimes those journeys include heartaches and rejections even if we follow Jesus.

Karoline Lewis writes We "share, along with Jesus, a move from chosenness and glory to heartache and rejection. To abuse and imprisonment. To injustice and death.

Once God says, "this is my daughter, this is my son," a declarative that we get to overhear, this is no mere baptismal affirmation anymore, or at least one where you can rest on your blessings. No, it propels you into a life, a way of being, that manifests the Kingdom of God for all to see. And when the Kingdom is visible, is palpable, you can be sure that forces perceiving it as a threat, as that which might usurp power, will be poised and ready to figure out how to extinguish its light. No wonder Peter had to sit for a bit in, "it's good to be here." Post-Transfiguration life is not for the faint of heart."⁵

We know this. We have experienced it. It is easier and safer to stay where we are to do and be and even try to believe the same way we always have. Staying the same is what we know. I get it. Even if we know change is upon us or being a different way is demanded of us.

Lewis continues "Especially when we see what we have known, on which we have relied, in whom we've believed all crumbling before our very eyes. Whether these disintegrating edifices are our churches, our denominations, our democracy -- or our relationships, our communities, our country -- too often our only options in response appear to be pop up tents, quick fixes, provincial vision statements, or nearsighted adaptations -- none of which actually trust in a future that God holds.

This leads to another overlooked truth of the Transfiguration -- that what we've seen so far is nothing compared to what's in store. The Transfiguration is no mere demonstration of God's

³ <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=5057>

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glory, but that which insists God's glory will persist in the midst of and in spite of all that would point to the contrary."

Many of you will know by now that I have never bought into the argument that the church is dying. I know full well, beyond a shadow of a doubt the church can't stay the same but to imagine that God's spirit, that faith and spirituality will no longer be important or exist in our world for me is not conceivable and has not my experience at least to this point in my life.

"The Transfiguration reveals the power of our present because of God's presence in Jesus, but it also points to the potential of our future. That's what Peter could not see. But, we can't blame him or think we could do better. Because, we can't. We constantly and continually try to contain the present. And why? Because we believe, falsely, that the present is that which can be controlled and therefore, our futures as well. And so, our default decisions are likely dependent on the assumption that our lives will willingly bend to our momentary needs and our contextual commitments.

This delusion, therefore, demands the claim of the Transfiguration in all of its fullness and refuses to narrate this event in Jesus' life as just one more miracle story. If the Transfiguration is to mean anything for our lives, it simply has to be that which intrudes on our present, changes our present, and contends that we imagine our future in a different kind of way -- a Lenten way, a crucifixion way, a resurrection way. Because any revelation of Jesus' teaching, preaching, pastoral care, or, even presence reveals our future and claims our future."⁶

Transformation is changing from one thing to another. The transfiguration is so much more than that. This moment in our Christian year is about seeing Jesus, as he really is. Spirituality is not just about changing and transformation, though we hope for these; it is also about recognizing the nature of spirituality and seeing clearly. If we do not see things as they truly are, how can we ever know real change? Seeing reality in the true light, the illumination of the divine is a spiritual necessity.

"Jesus in the Gospels is a keen observer. He sees things where others are unaware, not because of supernatural gift, but just being truly aware. Only Jesus notices the poor widow dropping her two pennies into the offering, giving all she had, and he brings it to the disciples' attention that her gift is greater than all the others. Jesus notices Zacchaeus up in the tree in the crowd and asks him to come down. He feels the woman's touch, who reached out to touch the hem of his garment in a great crowd hoping to be healed from her hemorrhage. Jesus watched human interaction and often seemed to see things upside-down from everyone else. The disciples tried to keep the noisy children away from Jesus for they were not important people, but Jesus said, "Let them come to me, for if you want to enter the Kingdom of God, you must be like a child." (Maybe in part because children are great observers!) Jesus observed nature, paying attention to mustard seeds, lilies, fig trees, the way seeds grow in soil; he seemed to even know where to fish. Jesus paid attention. He watched, he observed, he saw. This is the essence of spiritual life; to see, to experience illumination, seeing in the light of God.

If we want to know more of the reality of God, what we must do is pay attention and watch everything around us with the eyes of love. We watch, pay attention, and then in a moment we

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see the world illuminated. Our vision sees below the surface of things, a light shines in the darkness, with the very presence of God.”⁷

This my friends is exactly what our Lenten series is going to be about. For the next few weeks we are going to pay attention to what is around us and hopefully rediscover what God is up to in our neighbour hoods and then ultimately our lives. As you prepare to enter Lent, remember to pay attention to all the where-tos: the people and places and experiences that are part of your journey. Each one is a destination in itself. I actually have some homework for us all. Next week in the service we are going to map our important places, touch points, people, changes in this neighbourhood. For this week I would like to ask you all to take some time, walking through, praying over and meditating our neighbourhood so that when you come to church next Sunday we can have a conversation about where God has placed us. What might we be called to? Who might we be called to offer shalom to? What might seeing Jesus in our neighbourhood mean? The children are going to do this in children’s church too so I would encourage the families to do the same. If anyone would like to get a group together on Friday afternoon for a walk we could come together have pizza and then walk the neighbourhood starting at 5pm.

This Lent lets ask ourselves are we ready to embrace a new future? Are we ready to have our future claimed by God? One that is not just inhabiting space or intent on constructing places that define and limit, that restrain and monitor, but a future where the grandeur of Moses and Elijah, the sheer grace of God’s covenants with God’s people explode our expectations? Can we all admit that a transfigured God demands a transfigured believer? A transfigured believer who insists that God’s glory is not a self-individualized endeavour but needs to be experienced by all. This Lent lets allow this transfiguration revelation be one that reveals God’s dream for us. Amen.

⁷ <https://withallmysoul.com/2018/02/06/when-the-light-breaks-out/>