

Sermon - II Kings 2:1-12 Mark 9:2-9 II Corinthians 4:1-6 2/22/09

God with Us – Unveiling Our Future In Christ

Transfiguration - Seeing What's Behind What We're Seeing....

It's a strange story out of the Old Testament – strange, too, in the New. In the OT a transfer of jobs, of spiritual power from one prophet to another. In the NT a new understanding of God at work in the world.

On that mountain with Jesus - Moses – yes - law for life. In Elijah - yes – a prophet's word for living. And in Jesus, the fullness of life, the light of life.

In the OT story – the is on the story of Elijah - Elijah who called down God's fire when the priests of Baal could not; who caused food to last for the widow; who fled from the evil queen Jezebel, and who heard God – not in the earthquake wind and fire of life, but as a still small voice that called him to serve...

Elijah – who had given his people a new vision of what God desired and wanted and promised to those who were faithful - and Elijah who had a vision of a chariot coming for to carry him home.

Elijah - a witness to God's presence in God's world.... And - in his actions toward Elisha - his successor, perhaps there is a model for us in what we are trying to do here - to transfer leadership effectively from one leader to another.

Elijah asked Elisha if there was anything he wanted before Elisha was called to meet the Lord – and Elisha asked for a double blessing. And – strangely – that is just what Elisha got. Elijah was present at 8 miraculous events in his life time - Elisha – 16. God is good.

Now – be very clear - in talking about this transfer of power - I make no claim to be a prophet - and – as fine a candidate as I believe you will very soon have to elect as your next Pastor - he or she will not likely be either a prophet nor Jesus.

But the point is – that leadership in God's ministry - in Christ's Church – can be handed faithfully from one generation to another – as leaders point beyond themselves to the one who calls us all to serve. A timely story this morning out of the OT... God – with God's people -

And the truth of it is echoed in the story of the transfiguration -- Jesus and Moses and Elijah on the mountain with James and Peter and John. And the past and present and future of God's presence is made clear.

The message this morning is not so much about the transfer of leadership – as it is ... about the presence of God among God's people ... And - about how we can see God at work in our lives and in God's world.

No chariots of fire probably in your life. But don't you feel, haven't you felt the spirit of God at work sometimes, sometimes in your life. Earth quake wind and fire – sometimes, and sometimes, sometimes a still small voice guiding you, calling you.

Have you found the way, to know when to say, as Moses said, and Elijah said, and Jesus said, okay Lord, Yes Lord, I'm coming after you, I'm going your way Lord. Amen.

Please pray with me.... Lord of this day and all our days yet to be... help us hear your word, help me preach it - that your word might be our guide for life in Christ. Amen.

Life – tough - as we’ve known it – right now. Life – not quite fair. But then, when is this life, looked at from our perspective, ever really fair. In this run of the years we get does it ever work out all right> But this life is life – yes – in the presence of the living God. This livf we’ve been given is more than we can make it ever be.

This life we live calls us to live forward, to step every new moment into an unknown future. And to do so with confidence and courage and hope, because – while we don not know what the future holds for us, we do know the one who holds the future..

Right there in front of their eyes the 3 disciples saw it all - past – Moses declared the law, God with us in Words of truth... Elijah – the great prophet – party to God’s presence in very special acts of God’s care for God’s people.... And Jesus - God in flesh appearing - greater than the laws, more than a miracle worker - God with us in this sin touched sin broken world.

Lifting our vision higher – to see a larger truth. Transfiguration – seeing what is behind what we are seeing.

And how we need to see behind and beyond what we so often are looking at – what fills our senses so full we can hardly sense God’s presence. The world overwhelms us with all its doings. It was true then – in Jesus time – so much the truth of our day.

So - Up a mountain Jesus took them, those three disciples - away for a ways from the ways of the world - and away, they found God and more clearly, God’s way for them to live. This is my beloved --listen to him.

And the disciples were left looking only at Jesus. Left looking only at Jesus. And that’s the heart of the message of our faith. It’s all about Jesus. Jesus God in flesh appearing. Elijah the prophet went looking for God in earthquake wind and fire... and God’s power and presence are there – to be sure - God made it all.

But in the stillness, in the quiet, Elija heard God’s call. In all the splendor of brillent lights - sun, moon, and stars – in rainbow’s promises – we look for God – and sometimes feel the awe of God’s presence.

But Jesus came down the mountain, and his disciples saw only Jesus. Being as human as God can be – and helping us see where it is we will see Jesus.

It has always been, is, part of the wonder of this old and new space where we worship and work for Christ. Clear windows in the Chapel first built - and echoed in the sanctuary - and now a dominant feature of this Faith Enrichment Center. Windows . Windows on the world God made and where we will need to be – if we will be God’s people and know God’s presence...

Transfiguration - seeing what is behind what we are seeing. If we had eyes to see, we would see, could see, God's presence every where. Because sometimes we hear no voice, nor see God signs, and begin to wonder if there is a god at all.

In all the sin and sadness of our days, all the pain we inflict upon ourselves – we human beings... pride and prejudice – now a great recession of our own making... pain that seems to squeeze out any real promise of God's presence or of a better way to live.

And then.. sometimes, we get a chance to see and experience what Peter and James and John experienced. God with us. Not on some mountain top - as good as that can be – but rather we find god in flesh appearing – we feel God's presence when we simply open our eyes and minds and hearts to the world around us..

We find God not by heading off to a monestasy, not through some dramatic renunciation of the world – not even by some devotion to a great cause – feeding all the hungry in the world...

Instead we find God, remember God's words - listen to Jesus... we find God when we show kindness to the irritating person at work, when we do some random act of kindness for a stranger, or offer a loving word and touch to our spouse, or child, or parent.

We find God when we care and love the least and last and lost of God's children. For that's where Jesus was, and that's where Jesus told us he would always be.

And even then we can wonder if we have seen God at all... because the world seems so slow to change - and our good seems to do so little good... That was the Apostle Paul's struggle - he preached with power, and pointed God's presence out to so many - But so many seemed blind to his truth, seemed blind to the truth we've staked our lives on - the truth – God's word of truth.

How tragic life is when life truths are ignored or denied. For our former Mayor - who heard but did not heed God's good word. Or CEO's everywhere who could not see anywhere signs of what their greed was doing - to them and to others.

And the truth is slow to be believed. Legislators crying for working folk to take deep cuts in pay and benefits – and then take their own new pay raises in quiet arrogance. And Paul says – through the pain of his disappointment - that he will never the less still proclaim Christ as Lord – he will not cease to proclaim Christ as Lord ... and Paul will trust God to let light shine out of darkness.

The light of the truth of God's presence, God's love in the life of Jesus Christ. And in all he called his followers to do.

And it happens - light shines out of darkness – and maybe we know it best in Detroit – so dark now with despair. Out of the darkness in Detroit - and its tragic desolation today –

The light of faithfulness shines - faithful loving acts are its brightness – faithful acts shine light... Yesterday in the paper - a special about Curtis Granderson – a Tiger - and a Tiger for the truth of what kindness care and love can do making a difference... brightening young lives in the city.

The light of a family in Pontiac, sharing good news with others - about what faith can do - because you helped build their new home...

Detroit Rescue Mission, written up this week - 100 years of faithful service to those in need.

Light out of darkness - through... Transfiguration - seeing what is behind what you are seeing. You've seen it you've seen it. Its why you're here - To sharpen your mind and grow your spirit, and expand your heart.... So that yes you can see ever more clearly where God is present in the world...

Evelyn Underhill once said - For lack of attention, a thousand forms of loveliness elude us every day... lets pay attention. So that the presence of God does not elude us every day.....

Lord transfigure us.... So this day, we may stay the rush of our lives for a moment - may seek to steady ourselves, to stop and listen and look... to see what our God is doing in our days... or – to see what we should be doing in the days God gives us.

It is the invitation of this Lenten season, these forty days that begin this Wednesday - Ash Wednesday... . A special time with special times and ways for us to be still and know... know God's presence – and - to be about sharing - the one great hour of sharing offering –

So engaging in the work Jesus calls us to do.. Busy as we are booked 24 7 with stuff to do... we know there is better stuff we need to do.. we know there are ways for us to share ourselves -

To slow ourselves down just a bit - so we can see the world we're passing through, and come to know more deeply the God who is the God of this world – and the next - and who calls us to glorify and enjoy God now and forever... Lord – transfigure us - helps us see behind and beyond what we are seeing in the world - to see you - in all your glory – and to live in the goodness of your love - poured out for us in Jesus Christ, our lord and savior. Amen.

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