

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Transfiguration Sunday - Year B

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

II Kings 2:1-12

Psalm 50:1-5

II Corinthians 4:3-6

Mark 9:2-9

02/11/2018

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark:

2Six 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.

The Gospel of our Lord.

Prayer

Let us pray,

Amen.

A Sign

Good morning! Have you ever seen the 1985 film *Real Genius* with a very young Val Kilmer and Gabriel Jarrett? In it, a genius is sent early to college to help work in a department specializing in laser technology. We learn very quickly that the campus has two groups, the good guys and the bad guys, all competing to try and get the laser to work correctly. The “good guys,” led by Val Kilmer, are the goof balls and Val Kilmer takes the young teenager under his wing to show him the ropes. The “bad guys” are led by a guy named Kent, who is played by Robert Prescott. Now, while the movie is funny and worth a watch on your own time, what’s important for us today is a scene where our heroes plant a microphone on Kent’s braces and pretend to be the voice of Jesus. Kent is told to show up at the house of their professor to wait. As Kent is standing outside he decides that he’s had enough and goes inside. Standing in the house he demands from Jesus that he wants a sign! Anything! Just prove that what he had heard was real!

If only it were that easy, right? Simply demand a sign from God, thinking that if God really exists then God can simply perform some sort of sign. We’ve all done it at some point in our lives. What’s funny about today’s story is that I don’t think the disciples were really asking for any type of sign, and if they were, I doubt they wanted anything as dramatic as what they got.

Jesus takes with him three of his closest friends. They ascend the mountain and the Gospel of Mark tells us in simple terms that: “...*he (Jesus) 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.*” Next, my favorite disciple

does exactly what I would do in such a situation... he fills the moment of terror by talking, his old failsafe: *“Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”* ⁶*He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.*” You got to love his commitment, in the face of something no other human being has ever seen before. Peter just starts talking, trying anything to help him process what he’s seeing. Then, to add to their terror, they hear a voice from out of nowhere: *“This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”* It’s such a strange experience that you can’t help but see why the text has fascinated us for so long. It’s a high holy day before the long march of Lent, a brief taste of the glory that God has in store for the world.

But, Peter’s reaction hits at the problem. Even when we’re in a moment of something special, a moment where God reveals Godself to us in ways we couldn’t imagine, we fail to see the significance, or to realize what the point is in the first place. We don’t listen, and when we do, we use what we see and hear for the wrong reason. Pastor Hal Harter, a retired pastor here in the Peninsula Conference who has been a rostered leader for 63!!!! Years said something this past week that stuck with me when he was doing a presentation on prayer.

“Be quiet before the Lord. Know that you are in the presence of the Lord. Relax. God loves you as you are.”

Wow. Those words stuck with me all week. It’s a reminder for the disciples on the mountain and it’s a reminder for us today. When the congregational leadership had a retreat last month our scriptural theme was Exodus 3, the story of Moses and the burning bush. We

commented on how great it was that Moses was able to have a confirmation from his God, that he could point to a moment in time where God had been present. That sign is something we all look for, but like the disciples before us, I doubt we would know what to do with it. Even Moses is unsure and afraid.

After today we join the disciples and march down the mountain. Wednesday we start the season of Lent, that time of the year where we discipline ourselves. When I was a leader in Younglife we would take kids on a week-long trip every summer and for a lot of them it was the very first time they heard the story of God's incarnation, of God's life, death, and resurrection. A lot of kids came to believe over that week and we sat down with all of them the day before we went home to tell them that this was a mountain top experience. What we had been a part of was something special. Like the disciples in the text today, we were able to see a glimpse of God's glory... but we couldn't stay on that mountain. We had to go home, to the stuff and mess that was waiting for us at the end of the bus ride.

It would be nice to stay up on the mountain. Peter tries, we try, but the moment has to end, Jesus has to keep on moving towards Jerusalem. Today we have the pleasure of welcoming a few people as members of St. Paul's. It's a wonderful and joyous occasion! But, we do so realizing the responsibility that falls on all of our shoulders. When we welcome people into this congregation we do so remembering what that has meant for Christianity throughout all of time. When the church was still trying to figure out what it meant to be a community they began to call themselves the *ekklesia*. The Greek word literally means "a people called out." And that's what we are! A group of people who come together to praise and worship God, to take part in a

heavenly meal, and who leave this place filled with the Holy Spirit, called out into the rest of the world to make known the Good News.

When you claim membership to a church, it isn't like a country club, you don't get special privileges. Instead, like the disciples today you become a servant to Christ, called to serve wherever God calls, so that others might be witness to God's work.

Remember that as we begin our Lenten journey. You have volunteered to do the messiest jobs, to take on the hardest tasks, to receive no glory, because servanthood is the mark of a congregational member. Now, if you're like me, you're probably wondering how long you have to wait before you can make a polite getaway from the property, but please wait. Yes, things won't be easy where we're going, but like the disciples and the campers before us, I remind you of the moment we've shared on the mountain! Do you remember it?! That time when the glory of God shone forth in your life, where God will appear in the most intimate of moments... it's that experience that gives us the strength to continue in our call...

So I leave you with words from someone with much more experience and wisdom than myself...

"Be quiet before the Lord. Know that you are in the presence of the Lord. Relax. God loves you as you are."

Amen.