

Study Guide February 11, 2018

Theme: Transfiguration

Readings: 2 Kings 2:1-12; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-10; Psalm 50:1-6

This is the last Sunday of Epiphany. On Wednesday, we will begin our journey into Lent. In these last six weeks we have discovered many great epiphanies given to us from God through the Bible. We might now better understand how “Epiphany” means several things. It is a gift is received. And it is the gift must be shared. I believe that God is calling us into a rhythm or balance to our lives. We go inward to be with God, to receive; we go out in the world to share what we have been given – still with God.

We are called to balance the pouring out of our love with the resting in God. We are called to heal by just showing up, by laying on hands, by sharing what we have. This good news that was for the few people who heard it up close and personal is ours because they reached out and shared it. It will belong to those who have not yet heard, if we accept our call to share the story by how we live out our lives and as St. Francis said, “with words, if necessary.”

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Jesus' Messiahship is confirmed by the divine testimony that he is God's beloved Son (9:7). The three that see the transfiguration are also those who witnessed the healing of Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:37) and will witness his agony in Gethsemane (14:33). Although the disciples have seen the healing and the transfiguration, they do not seem to have exceptional insight to what it might mean to them, and to the world around them.

The transfiguration story is a form of an epiphany, a sudden manifestation of the divine and when humans see or witness an epiphany, they generally have an ah-ha moment, followed by confusion (now what) or fear (what does this mean?) Peter (once again) demonstrates that he doesn't "get it" and Jesus once again has to explain his death and resurrection. Upon this mountain God once again reveals to his beloved people the divine truth of His eternal glory. And better still, God invites us to be a part of it.

The mystics of nearly every spiritual religion would agree that there are many paths to God, and any paths we take up the mountain will reveal this truth. The path of Jesus Christ, however, is slightly different in that it is the one where the Incarnate led the way. Through Christ, God leads us home to our eternal glory.

Read: 2 Kings 2:1-12

In light of the winter Olympics, this is the passing of the torch, so to speak. The great prophet Elijah is lifted up in a whirlwind leaving all his responsibility and even a double portion of his spirit. This story is more about Elisha and his transformation. By the way, did you notice Elijah does not die? Think about that!

Q: In all that you know about Epiphany try to see this event through the eyes of Elisha, or maybe one of the other prophets who have gathered in the distance. What stands out as unusual?

Q: What epiphanies has God revealed to you?

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

The important theological theme here is the knowledge of God; especially centered in Paul's interpretation of God's work in the world through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Notice the "veil" which is mentioned in this passage, which Paul uses to compare the revelation of divine glory in Moses and Jesus. Both men brought the law down the mountain from God, and both glowed in the divine light for doing so.

Q: What light has God shined on your heart as you read this passage?

Q: How might this confession of sorts help you see your own transformation?

Read: Mark 9:2-10; Exodus 34:29-35

Here we are given the gift of the story of the Transfiguration. The disciples that were present received a great gift as they witnessed Jesus transfigure and it confused them as well. God gives them the gift of instruction (listen to Jesus.) Jesus reminds them that their place is not on a mountain, but with the people of God, focused on the present. Notice who is present: Moses and Elijah! Susan Butterworth writes, "The mountain is a thin veil, the bridge between the human and divine." Think about that as you read Exodus.

Q: Stand in the shoes of the three Apostles, and try to see this unfold before your very eyes. What stood out to you in these passages?

Q: What is it about mountains and God's divine revelations? How is a mountain a metaphor for what you are going through?

Q: Take a moment to think or discuss the times when have you seen the humanity of Jesus active in your life or in others lives? When have you felt Christ's divine presence? When have you seen Christ's light in the world?

Slow Read: Psalm 50 The passage calls us to listen to God, to be faithful and merciful as creatures who come into his presence. As you read, try to imagine yourself standing before God. What words or phrases stand out as God speaks to you?

PRAYER: O God, reveal to me the glory of your Son. Grant that by my faith I will see the light of his countenance, and be strengthened to bear the cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.