

Transfiguration 2/14/21
Mark 9:2-9 B

AND AFTER SIX DAYS JESUS TOOK WITH HIM PETER AND JAMES AND JOHN, AND LED THEM UP A HIGH MOUNTIAN BY THEMSELVES. AND HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM.

Have you ever noticed that when some big hero of the faith in the Bible goes up upon a mountain, something spectacular happens? Think about it.

Moses. Moses goes up Mt. Sinai. There, he gets the law of God for the people of Israel. And, the spectacular happens. There is thunder and lightning and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast. The Lord God descended on the mountain in fire. And the trumpet grew louder and louder. There, the glory of the Lord is on that mountain in such a brilliant way that when Moses comes down from the mountain, his human face radiated the glory of God so that the people were afraid to come near him. So, Moses had to put a veil over his face.

Elijah. Remember the showdown he had with the false prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel? There, the spectacular happens. The Prophet confronted evil King Ahab for abandoning the Commandments of God and following Baal. So, good opposed evil when Ahab gathered the false prophets on the mount to confront Elijah. The 450 prophets of the false god cried and begged and even cut themselves to implore their god to consume the sacrifice on the altar. Elijah had the people cover his altar with water three times and He called upon the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the fire fell and consumed the offering on the altar.

This all causes wicked queen Jezebel to put a price on his head, so the Prophet flees where – to Mount Horeb. And what happens there? The spectacular. The LORD passed by and a great wind tore the mountains;

after the wind there was an earthquake; after the earthquake was a fire. But, God did not speak to Elijah in the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire, He God spoke to the Prophet in a low whisper, bringing him comfort and peace.

So it was that six days, six days after Peter confessed Jesus to be the Christ, Jesus takes Peter and James and John up on a high mountain. When they got there, the spectacular happens. Jesus is transfigured before them. The glory of His divine nature shone through His human bones and skin. His clothes become dazzling white, “as no one on earth could bleach them” (v. 3). And, Moses and Elijah appear, talking with Jesus. Peter and James and John were privileged, they had the joy, of seeing for a brief moment, Jesus in His divine glory, which we will see in heaven forever and ever without end.

It’s amazing. It’s spectacular. And in response to it, Peter says, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah” (v. 5). That’s what he said and Mark tells us, “For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified” (v. 6). Mark says said that because he didn’t know what else to say because he was terrified. They saw the Lord in all of His glory with their human eyes and they were terrified.

Much like Isaiah was. Isaiah saw a vision of the

Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me!

For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (Is 6:1-5)

Isaiah is terrified in the presence of God. Peter and James and John are terrified in the presence of God. There's a reason for that. In and of themselves, Isaiah, and Peter and James and John are sinners. Just like you. You are a person of unclean lips and you dwell in the midst of people with unclean lips. And you confess that -- that we are by nature sinful and unclean...that you have sinned against God in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone; for which we deserve God's present and eternal punishment. And your life shows it, in your worry and stewing and fretting; your doubt of God's promises; your disrespect; your anger and resentment and bitterness; your lust; your gossip; your coveting. You can put on a costume and look pretty good front of your neighbor, maybe even impress them, but God ... God knows the depth of your sin. And, you know He knows the depth of your sin and that's why you are terrified to stand in the presence of God. As a sinner, you cannot look upon the glory of God and expect to live.

But, the Bible comforts and assures us that we will live in the glory of God forever and ever, without end. We have that comfort and assurance because Jesus didn't stay on that mountain. He came down to the plain and went to another mount called Calvary. There, the spectacular happened. Jesus was, once again, transfigured. His face and His body were turned red – red from His own blood, flowing from His head, His hands, His feet. He endured that bloody death because of your sin. He is the sacrifice for your sins and for the sins of all the world (cf. 1 Jn 2:2).

Which means that you are forgiven all of your sin, so standing in the presence of God is not terrifying for you at all.

You know, when you stop and think about it for a minute, you really can't blame Peter. We can understand his sentiment of wanting to stay of the mount of transfiguration forever and ever. Why go back to the dusty roads, the Roman soldiers, the hot, burning sun? Or, for us, we don't want freezing, beyond bitter, temperatures; paying taxes; endless doctor appointments; the dull, boring routine of punching the time clock; frustration; regret; sorrow. We want to be with Jesus in all His glory!

Did you notice what Mark tells us after the transfiguration on the mount? Peter and James and John came down from the mountain, but they did not come down alone. Jesus went with them. They could not stay on the mountain, so Jesus came with them to the plain. Jesus, who promises you and me, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). When we open our eyes from sleep in the morning, Jesus is with us. When we go to school, to work, the doctor's office, as we face pain, sadness, loneliness, injustice; when the cross is heavy and the darkness is pitch blackness before us, when we close our eyes in the sleep of death, Jesus is with us.

Jesus is ever with us, pointing our hearts toward the rest of heaven to come, where, the book of Revelation cheers us,

"Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

With our own eyes, we will see Jesus in glory forever and ever. And we will not be terrified. We will simply be filled with eternal joy, that has no end.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.