

## Homily for Transfiguration. 2 Sun Lent A

Before any major moments or decisions in our lives, we often have a story that leads up to that which precedes the public knowledge. The same is true for this most important moment in Jesus' life. Professor William Barclay was very helpful in describing this event for both Jesus and the disciples.

Jesus and the disciples have climbed to the slopes of Mt. Hermon... the actual place in northern Galilee where the Transfiguration took place. It is nighttime, the disciples are asleep- and Jesus is by himself - praying for guidance for perhaps the most difficult decision of his life.

In the Gospels leading up to this moment, we realize that there is a wide continuum of faith the people have in Jesus. Some like the disciples have moved completely in their lives to be with him.... to live and travel with him...

To see all the positive moments of faith others have at the time or to see all the confusion in people's minds -how quickly to seek help and then go back to a daily life - perhaps with Hope? To see- how distrustful many are - especially the leaders...whom they expected would recognize Jesus....

So at this point in the Gospels - some years into his public ministry...Jesus has seen enough of human nature - to believe that - if he pursues this path of ministry and challenge - he can expect the worse for himself...

He realizes that people love someone they can turn to for help - a masterful person that could confront the evils of the day.... desire a Superhero that would overcome the Romans - and bring peace and independence back to Israel.

Jesus has been seriously looking into people to see if they even have a sense of who and what he was - what he was calling them to and from where. Very recently he had stopped and put it directly to the disciples themselves. *"Who do you say that I am?"*

Peter answers immediately: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" Some different translations say.... You are the Messiah - or the Anointed one...

So Jesus knew they had a clearer grasp of his *Presence* - and that is what he was taking to prayer that night - while others slept. Would that be enough to go forward - to continue on the path ahead? Was this really what God wanted? Was this actually the path God wanted him to take?

So the purpose of this night on Mt. Hermon was for Jesus to pray - to listen - to ask...

*"Is this Your Will that I go on this way???"*

This was always the path of Jesus .... To pray - to listen - but this night was heightened with the awareness of the confrontation and the dismissal by the leaders... which automatically made him an enemy of the Roman Empire....

So in the loneliness of that night - - he prayed and he listened....

Then - in the darkness 2 men appeared with him.. Moses and Elijah - ... great men who had also sought out God's will for them - and on mountain sides as well. Moses on Mt. Sinai - seeking how to lead the people - and when Moses came down from the Mountain - they said that- the skin on his face shone...

Elijah - running from danger - threatened with death - sought God's will on Mt. Horeb - Prayed for an answer - that came: not in the wind - not in an earthquake - not in fire - but in a still small voice - telling him to "go back". and when he arrives - he is to anoint specific leaders of the people....

In Luke's account of the Transfiguration - he highlights these two men talking with Jesus about his departure - and how he would be fulfilling God's plan. It is interesting to note that the word "departure" in Greek is "*exodus*". The word that led the people out of Egypt to the promised land....a journey that demanded the utter and complete trust in God as they went into the unknown.

These two men - Moses - the greatest of the lawgivers and Elijah - the greatest of the Prophets - appeared to Jesus at a time He was about to set out into the unknown...and they told him to go.... In these 2 men - all of history rose up and pointed out the way. But that is not all - as startling as it must have been...

The 3 disciples awaken to see all this - Jesus glowing as if his very soul was shining through him.... And then Moses and Elijah! Our wonderful Peter -in amazement and awe cries out : "Let us build 3 shrines right on this spot for Moses, Elijah and you!"

But he is suddenly silenced by this surrounding cloud and a **voice** that from Jesus' baptism says- once again...

***"This is my beloved Son - in whom I am well pleased... Listen to him!"***

All of this solidified for Jesus. - the path ahead. As the disciples fell on their faces overcome with fear. Jesus went to them and touched them....saying:

"Stand up, - don't be afraid." When they slowly looked up...they saw only Jesus.

Luke goes on to say that they kept silence and told no one.

For the disciples....Every event after that must have been filtered through that experience...It might be good for us to remember and ponder that through the coming days of Lent...

But I would like to reflect for a minute on what it means to "truly Listen" - I don't mean hearing - not even our ears. But to truly listen with all our senses and especially our heart. That is what contemplative prayer involves.... our mind come last.

Every human being created by God in God's image is a unique and personal choice of God. In every circumstance - God's love for each person is complete. God knows their possibilities and lives within

them all. Whether those possibilities are positive for growth or not.... Whether their circumstances allow for happiness or suffering.... God lives within them all.

As Professor Barclay called the “soul” of Jesus shining through in the Transfiguration- deep within each person - within each tiny piece of creation - you might witness a Transfiguration as the the creating presence of God shines through.

God shines through and is reflected in the person smiling at you...in the trees bringing forth new blossoms.... The pets begging for food...in the birds singing .... The children’s snowmen standing tall in the storm. Listen - you may hear the words of Genesis.... **“God saw that it was good!”**

*Good* as sun melts the snowmen - *Good* as people reach out to others in need...*Good* as people stand tall for justice - *Good* as a neighbor brings a casserole...*Good* as you answer a call for help in a faraway country....for they are God’s special loved ones too...

The lessons today? Are we willing to look at the path ahead and spend time in prayer to ask God - Is this the way?

Are we willing to believe there are *no immediate and fail-safe answers* to the critical questions we face in this century?

Are we willing to put aside our solutions of building shrines to our present moments in order to truly listen to the ways of God in our world?

How do we listen? I love author James Finley’s call for “The Pause”..... for instance...

When you go to get into your car.... Stop and look up...around.... breathe and truly see what is there... or when you go to brush your teeth in the morning or night... pause and look in the mirror.... Look at yourself...no shuttering allowed.... You are beautiful as you are....

When you open the curtains in the morning - or close them at night...pause and look out at the day - or into the dark. *there never will be one day or night exactly like this one -ever again.....*

Patterns like this prepare our minds and hearts to be contemplative - to see deeper into life and to find peace.... To know there is always hope - and that God within you...will always be present - - - from your first breath to your last.... God is within you...

I am sure from the Transfiguration onward... Jesus prayed in this way.... For strength. For wisdom - to draw others away from the outer world of fear to the inner world of strength and faith....

As Jesus walked forward toward the Cross.... He was filled each day with those he met and loved - with those open so he could help - with the beauty of the countryside\_ and the world around him..... from all of this - Jesus daily grew in love and gratitude *as* “He paused and “Saw”.... once again....

***“THAT IT WAS GOOD!”***

