

Transfiguration of Our Lord-February 11, 2024

Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 and Mark 9:2-9

"The Gospel is Unveiled"

Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen
If you don't want someone to see something, you do whatever you can to cover it up. Even if it is something good that you are hiding, you wait for the right time before others get to see it. When people get a new or different vehicle, it is not uncommon to put it into hiding in the garage and wait a while before others find out that you have something new. It used to be more common for brides to wear a veil that covered their face on their wedding day and the veil would stay in place until the right moment when the officiant of the ceremony declared them husband and wife and the veil would be lifted from the bride's face when the groom was told that he could kiss the bride.

In the second lesson for today, Paul uses this veiled image when he speaks about the gospel. Even though at this point in the bible, all the important events of his life had taken place. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, baptized in the Jordan River, tempted by Satan in the wilderness, suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified at Golgotha, descending into Hell, after three days arose from his grave where they laid his body, and ascended into heaven Paul declared that there were still people who did not see the light of Christ. The gospel was veiled or hidden from them. Paul says the same thing in a different way by saying that the god "little g" of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the Light of the Gospel. But no longer is the gospel veiled from others. And it is the sole purpose of this church and THE church around the world to unveil the gospel by proclaiming it.

At the beginning of the season of Epiphany when Jesus was baptized and now today at the end of the season of Epiphany when Jesus was transfigured there was a lot to see. Our altar committees have helped us remember what was seen by changing the color of the paraments on the altar, lectern, and pulpit from green to white remind us of the light that shown through the heavens when Jesus was baptized and the dazzling whiteness of Jesus himself that blinded the eyes of Peter, James and John as they witnessed Jesus speaking with Moses and Elijah.

I wonder how Peter, James and John knew the two people that were speaking with Jesus were Moses and Elijah. None of these three disciples that seemed to be privileged to be with Jesus on special occasions had never seen Moses and Elijah before. Mark doesn't tell us that Moses was still holding onto the tables of stone and Elijah looked like John the Baptist as he had been described in the Old Testament as wearing camel hair and was eating locusts and wild honey. Mark doesn't tell us what they were saying, so they didn't hear Moses talking about the golden calf that was made when he came down from the mountain after receiving the Ten Commandments or Elijah talking about the story, we heard this morning when he was taken away into heaven in a chariot of fire and horses. Of all that was seen that day, Mark doesn't mention that they were wearing lanyards with id badges with their names clearly printed on them. But of all that wasn't clear that day, there seemed to be no question that it was Moses and Elijah who were talking with Jesus. Moses and Elijah could be considered two cold cases in scripture that were yet to be solved. No one knew where Moses was buried because we are told that God buried him...somewhere. From the first reading today, we don't even know if Elijah was ever buried since he just disappeared into the heavens in a chariot of fire.

We do know what Moses and Elijah represented. Moses represented the law of God and Elijah who prophesied that one day a messiah would be revealed from the line of David. Moses never got to see the promised land that he led his chosen people right to the entrance but never allowed to cross the border and Elijah never got to see the Messiah that he said would one day come. But on this day, the day that we call the Transfiguration of our Lord, Moses and Elijah appear and they are not only seen with Jesus, but they are talking with him. It would be my guess that although Mark doesn't tell us what was said, Jesus more than likely did most of the talking.

It must have been quite a sight to behold. Maybe we would be no different than Peter if we had been on the mountain with these three disciples and would want to make the moment last longer by setting up a camp to at least spend the night. But at the very moment Peter blurted out his idea of protecting Jesus, Moses and Elijah with a tent, a cloud covered all of them and though the cloud came a voice that spoke.

The voice's message was not hard to remember. There were three people to look at on the mountain, but only one, only Jesus was God's son, the Beloved. And the voice told these three disciples to "Listen to Him". Not to Moses. And not to Elijah. Listen to Him! There was no confusion about who they were to listen to since when they raised their eyes back to where they once saw three people, there now was only one person left to see. Jesus. Jesus who brought them up on the mountain in the first place to witness his transfiguration. But now more important than being witnesses to what they saw they were to be proclaimers of what they would hear Jesus say to them.

There was no one else on the mountain that day to proclaim anything to. So, Jesus led them down the mountain to a world of unbelievers. Moses found the same thing when he came down the mountain with the Ten Commandments. However, the only solution Moses had for the unbelievers he spoke to was the law and instead of making the people better they realized they were worse off than before.

Peter, James, and John had the gospel unveiled to them. It wasn't Moses who gave rules to follow or Elijah who only talked about a messiah. The gospel that was unveiled to Peter, James and John was Jesus and it is still in this place and at this time, Jesus alone.

The gospel reading for today begins with a period of time. Six days later. In the creation story it was the Lord who spent six days creating all things, but on the seventh he rested from all the work that he had done. When Moses went up the Mountain to receive the Ten Commandments, we are told that he was on the seventh day before the Lord spoke to him. Peter, James, and John spent six days going up the mountain with Jesus before the voice from the cloud told them to listen to Jesus.

Here you are again in this place or maybe even listening from your living room and maybe even in another state, but you are resting from your work and doing what the voice told Peter, James, and John to do. Listen to Him. Listen to Jesus. The gospel is unveiled when you hear it. The light of Christ shines through the darkness of your world and your sin when his voice is heard. The gospel was unveiled on the first Transfiguration Day when it was proclaimed from the voice from the cloud. It is proclaimed on this Transfiguration Day that Christ who was the light that is here for you. Amen.