

Mark 9:2-9
St Mark – February 11, 2024
Last Sunday after the Epiphany
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Let him be your savior

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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, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then 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.” He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Let him be your savior

Today is the last Sunday in Epiphany. The ‘Epiphany’, is defined as an illuminating discovery, a realization. Such was the epiphany of the three wise men who traveled a long way to worship our Lord Jesus. The wise men who first recognized Jesus to be the newborn king of the Jews.

Their illuminating discovery of our savior was at the beginning of Jesus’ years of walking among us as a human man. Today we read about God’s confirmation of Jesus being the Savior of the whole world. That comes as he is much closer to the end of his life on Earth.

This reading tells of what many of us know as The Transfiguration. Every year on the ‘Last Sunday in Epiphany’, just before we begin the season of Lent we read about The Transfiguration.

Our season of Epiphany is short this year. Just one day more than 6 weeks and sometimes it lasts over 9 weeks, but always whether short or long ends with The Transfiguration.

This story is recorded in all of the Synoptic Gospels; Matthew and Luke as well as the version from Mark we read this morning. The story is almost exactly the same in all three.

God confirms Jesus to be the Savior of the world as Jesus' being is transfigured. He becomes the embodiment of light as witnesses of the Old Covenant (represented by Elijah and Moses) and the New Covenant (represented by Peter, John, and James) look on.

It's worth noting that Peter wants to make this visitation of Elijah and Moses permanent by building each a dwelling and he wants to make one for Jesus as well. Peter hasn't yet learned that nothing on Earth is permanent. Peter has not yet learned that the riches represented in Elijah, Moses, and Jesus are held in Heaven. Permanently present in life eternal.

We'll think more about that a few days from now on Ash Wednesday, but now we focus on Jesus' transfiguration in this moment from fully human to fully divine. This moment was significant and filled with power. It makes sense that we should dwell on its mystery and grace just before we enter the season of Lent.

Without that power, mystery, and grace what would be the point? Why would we set aside time to make more room in our lives for Jesus if it weren't for that mystery, power, and grace?

Lent is the time we set aside each year to encourage ourselves to let God fill our lives. That scary time of giving up ourselves to God. We'll think more about that on Wednesday, but for today it is God as manifested in the Son that we study.

On the day of 'The Epiphany' and the several Sundays after our gospel readings help us discover and realize Jesus. They give us countless reasons to put our faith in him.

We read about his baptism and then the calling of his 12 closest disciples as they realize that he is the long awaited Messiah.

As our epiphany continues we learn of his unique and startling authority as he teaches something new and we read about his power as he heals the afflicted of every disease. We watch as even the unclean spirits obey his command.

The many weeks of Epiphany prepare us for wanting more. For wanting to grab hold of Jesus for dear life.

Epiphany prepares us for Lent. That time we set aside each year to encourage ourselves to let God fill our lives. That scary time of giving up ourselves to God. First making room and then using that space for God.

The 40 days of Lent begin on Ash Wednesday, just three days from now, and end on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter morning. If you're counting, you'll find that Sundays are not included in the 40 days of Lent.

For today, before we get to that penitential time of Lent, we focus on the glory of Jesus. We focus on God's beckoning to each of us when He claims Jesus as His own. We focus on the awestruck fear felt by Peter, John, and James as God held every bit of their attention when He transfigured Jesus into the embodiment of light and proclaimed:

“This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”

Suddenly when they looked around, Elijah and Moses were no longer there, the voice from the cloud was silent and only Jesus remained. How could we ever want more evidence of God, of Jesus than this?

For those who confront God with, “why do you remain silent” or some other complaint about not proving Himself, how can ‘The Transfiguration’ not be enough? and then I remember. We tend to think of our own counting of days as the same as God's. Our lives are short and God's time is infinite. To God it was only minutes ago that he spoke from the cloud and proclaimed Jesus' authority.

God's ‘minutes’ are more than 2,000 of our years. So is God silent or are we simply impatient children as we try to impose our sense of time on God?

Whatever the case ‘The Epiphany’ teaches that the wise men's illuminating discovery, their realization that they were in the presence of the newborn king of the Jews was just the beginning. The Epiphany wasn't over when the wise men left the manager. It was only the beginning.

When Jesus becomes the embodiment of light in the presence of the Old Covenant (represented by Elijah and Moses) and the New Covenant (represented by Peter, John, and James) The Epiphany continues.

Jesus moves from that moment to complete the work he was given to do. Jesus moves forward to save the world. Jesus moves closer to each of us. He extends his hand in love.

Jesus longs for our epiphany of the place he holds in our very existence. Beckoning each of us. Beckoning me. Beckoning you.

Beckoning, “recognize me.” “Invite me to share your life.” “Hold onto me.”

Beckoning, “Follow me.” “Let me be your door to God and life eternal.”

Beckoning, “let me be your Savior.”