

February 11, 2018

Transfiguration Sunday

PRAYER

May the words of my mouth be meditations to our hearts and be always acceptable unto Thee. O Lord, our strength and our redeemer.

AMEN

SERMON

Today we wrap up the last Sunday of Epiphany. We've been hearing the different ways that Jesus revealed himself to his disciples and to all the people who were willing to come out and hear him speak. Come out to be fed. Come out to be healed. To be witnesses if you will who Jesus was and what he was offering to the world. (Book drops on alter). You okay? You never know, I had an acolyte faint one time and every time it's always like that, it gets me. (Laughter)

In this revelation, in this epiphany Jesus chooses to take with him Peter and James and John to go out and to climb the mountain. Where they become witnesses of the transfiguration. Of Jesus being changed in their sight. To see also Elisha and Moses speaking with Jesus. Now normally when this event comes up, the transfiguration, I focus on what's being revealed in Jesus. I believe it is that moment when Jesus is seen as the divine and human person that he is. For a brief moment, the humanity veil is moved away, and Peter, James, and John see Jesus as he truly is. As he deeply is with both humanity and divinity.

And I think that's what's taking place and that's what they see when he becomes dazzling white. This time I'd like to look at something a little different. Not what was being revealed but to whom and why it was being revealed.

Just over a week ago there was a clergy study day and a teacher was brought in for us clergy. And this is one of the gospel readings during this church year that we spoke about. She spoke, and we discussed. And one of my colleagues pointed out that they thought that maybe Peter, James, and John were singled out to go up the mountain to Jesus because they needed this revelation. They needed to see this.

That this somehow was going to push them in a new place in their relationship to Jesus Christ. And of course, that may well be. But as I was listening to that I thought that doesn't click with me. Peter, James, and John are three of the four disciples who have been with Jesus the longest. They have been witnesses from the very beginning of his teaching and preaching. They have witnessed his miracles, his healings. The feeding of the multitudes. And so, I began to think it's not because they needed it. I think it was because they were ready for it.

I mean why would you not bring all of the disciples. This is a very powerful moment. This is equivalent to the baptism that Jesus received from John and the voice of God saying, "This is my son, the beloved, with him I am well pleased." The descending of the dove at the baptism. This is a pivotal moment when Jesus is transfigured. He is changed. They are seeing him as he truly is as son of God. He is joined by the giver of the law Moses and the great prophet Elisha.

Why would you not have all the guys there? And the answer that I kept coming up with is they weren't all ready to receive that epiphany, that revelation. That Peter, James, and John were. And so, he asks them to become a part, to go up the mountain and put themselves in a place trusting in Jesus. And coming to a place where they then receive a new understanding. A deeper understanding of who Jesus truly is and what was about to take place.

In the gospel according to Luke, where we also hear the transfiguration story, we hear that Moses and Elisha were speaking to Jesus about what to do next. To set his face to Jerusalem where he would ultimately go through the passion, crucifixion, and resurrection.

So, this is a pivotal moment. And now they see Jesus as he is joined by Moses and Elisha and they too hear this voice. "This is my son, the beloved, listen to him." They were ready to receive that. Even though they were terrified, even though they were afraid, even though they didn't know exactly what to say. Even though people wanted to build three booths so that they could stay in that moment. Stay in that place. It was now time to go back down. They have received what they needed to receive.

And now, they were to go back down. And the other thing that makes me think that these three were ready to receive this, is that Jesus tells them explicitly keep this to yourself. This is not for everybody. This is not for the other disciples yet. They will come to that point where they are ready to receive it. But that won't be until after the resurrection.

So here you have this epiphany. Here you have this deeper understanding. Here you have this knowledge of who Jesus is and when the time is right, you will be able to share that with others. To help them understand what has taken place. After the son of God has gone through the passion, the crucifixion, death, and resurrection, then will be the time to share with them that this is indeed the son of God. That God was dwelling with Jesus from the very beginning and it is through that indwelling. God joining himself with humanity and the world that salvation is being offered to you and to all.

It's really a very powerful moment. It was something that they were ready to receive that the others weren't. And that they would then be

charged with sharing with them and everyone else at the right time. In God's time.

The more I thought about that, the more I thought that that is how God works in us. With all of us who have been baptized, who have made that commitment to come to know and understand God more. It is particularly important as we are entering the season of Lent when we are called to self-examination. When are called to study, when we are called to devotion. When we are called to be more intentional about our relationship with God. It's that moment, that time, that season a very solid season yes. A very powerful season when we are not alone in making our relationship with Jesus stronger.

We are joined by our brothers and sisters in the church who are all taking that time and making that space to receive what God knows that we are ready to know and to understand about who God is. And about our life and relationship with God. And so, we put ourselves in a position to deepen that relationship. I'm convinced that's why we as an Episcopal church in the diocese of the central gulf coast is encouraging everyone to study the same thing.

What are we studying? We are studying the gospel according to Luke. The story of who Jesus is and what Jesus did. It's always fun to do a study of the scriptures because invariably people who are participating will hear something that they haven't heard before. Some literally will say, "I didn't even know that was in there." Well, it's because now you are ready to hear it. Now you're ready to receive it. Now you're ready to have this deeper understanding of who Jesus is and what Jesus did. And what it means for your life. In the living your life as a citizen of God's kingdom. And as a son or daughter of God.

So, we are doing this study, so that we can put ourselves in a place just as Jesus took those three disciples and brought them to that place.

Where they could see, and know, and understand. And have this relationship in knowledge and understanding deepened. We are called to do the same thing during this season of Lent and through the season of Easter. And I would say that as we do that, as we take that time and set apart time to study, to pray, to worship. That God reveals to us what we are ready to receive. About who we are in relationship to God. About who Jesus is and what Jesus really did and what Jesus really calls us to. And to have that opportunity because we are ready, because we are encountering Jesus and God in this different way to live our lives in a deeper relationship.

It's about being aware, not only through our studies but through the living our lives especially in this season of Lent. As we see the opportunities where God reveals himself. Where God reveals what God is doing in the world. In the lives around us and in our own lives as we are ready to take that next step in our journey. As we are ready to know more deeply. As we are ready to commit ourselves to God more deeply.

I believe that God will show us those opportunities. That our eyes will be opened to opportunities to serve in God's name. Where we see the opportunities to touch lives. Like the disciples, we will have the opportunity to share what we have received with those who are just becoming ready to take their next step. To share with them what we have found in our lives and in our relationship with God in Jesus Christ.

The transfiguration is full. It is a powerful, powerful moment. And not just for the disciples that were there. But for those who would receive what they saw, what they heard, what they experienced. As the other disciples became ready. As they were striving to understand what had taken place in the crucifixion and in the resurrection. Then those three disciples, Peter, James, and John, could share with them that moment. That the person that they saw on the cross was not just a man but was

truly the son of God. And because it was the son of God, then this death was not in vain. That this resurrection is true.

That the offering and gift of salvation is fulfilled in this life, death, and resurrection. My prayer for you, my prayer for all of us is that we take this opportunity to see where we are ready. To allow God to speak to us through our worship, through our prayer, through our study. To reveal himself more and more to us. That we might become more closely the children that God has called us to be. To witness to the truth of Jesus Christ of salvation and of the kingdom of God.