

IK Synod Sermon and Prayers
Transfiguration Sunday
February 14, 2021

Gospel Reading – Mark 9:2-9 NRSV
The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark the 9th chapter.
Glory to you, O Lord.

² Six days later, 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, ³ and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵ 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.” ⁶ He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷ Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” ⁸ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. ⁹ 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.

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, O Christ.

Grace to you and peace from God, the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

On Sunday, February 14, we celebrate the Transfiguration of Our Lord. This is the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany. Now we turn our eyes and our hearts toward the cross, as in a few days we have Ash Wednesday and begin the Season of Lent and our Lenten journey.

Our reading begins with these words, “Six days later...” You may be wondering, what had happened six days ago. If we look back at the verses just prior to our Gospel reading we find Jesus teaching his disciples and the crowd. “Then Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.’”

Six days after this, Jesus takes Peter (the one who rebuked him) and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves.

And on that mountain, Jesus was transfigured before them. 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.”

I wonder if the desire to make these three dwellings was Peter's attempt to preserve the moment. It was such an amazing moment. And, taking into consideration what happened six days before, I wonder if this was also Peter's attempt to try to preserve more than just that amazing moment on the mountain. Was Peter also trying to preserve, trying hold on to, Jesus. Jesus in the flesh.

Obviously, Peter was disturbed by Jesus' passion prediction, "the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be killed..." He was so upset that He took Jesus aside and scolded him.

I can only imagine that Peter wanted to hold on to Jesus, denying his upcoming death, preserving life as it was right then. He wanted to hold on to the present, to hold to what was known. The future, the unknown seemed, not so good.

How about you, what do you want to hold on to? Maybe you are holding on to.....

- Your youth, or even those middle-years, trying to defy age
- Children who are growing up way too fast
- An unhealthy or abusive relationship
- Well-worn patterns of living that are being challenged by your growing awareness of injustice, inequality and inequity in our country and in our world
- The illusion that if we wait long enough we can return to "normal life" as it was pre-pandemic, ignoring the effect of this pandemic on our own lives and on the world.
- Past traditions and practices of your congregation that now need to be altered in the face of this Covidtide and even more in post-pandemic times

We all like to hold on to the known, what seems safe and comfortable and predictable. Moving into the future, not knowing what is ahead, well, it takes faith.

I wonder if Peter even heard the last part of Jesus' sentence as he was teaching? The Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be killed. But listen to this Peter, but listen to this people of God, "and in three days rise again." "In three days rise again."

Up on the mountain after Jesus' transfiguration and his conversation with Moses and Elijah, a voice came from the cloud saying, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Listen to him! And what does Jesus say to the disciples as they come down the mountain, "Don't talk about any of this until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Are you listening Peter? Are you listening people of God? Yes, Jesus will die, but yes, Jesus will be raised. Out of dying comes rising. Out of death comes resurrection. It is God's promise.

Holding on can hold us back, letting go can bring new possibilities and new life.

- Our youth and middle-years can blossom into new found wisdom and experiences and grandchildren and retirement and so much more

- Our children can grow into new independence and maturity
- Well-worn patterns can be exchanged by new awareness that leads to action
- Letting go of what used to be normal makes room for developing new normals
- And letting old ways die, can allow for being church in a new way in a changed world sprouting new opportunities for sharing and living the Gospel.

In resurrection, through Jesus we can let go of the known, of the past, of the present, and embrace the future.

As one of my colleagues says, “God is not a God of rewinding. God is a God of redeeming.”

Moving into the future, not knowing what is ahead, well, it takes faith.

God is sending us. God is with us on the journey. And at the same time God is ahead of us on the journey. God already knows the future. That’s why we can faithfully follow.

God is calling us, inviting us to join the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, at work in the world, at work in the church. May God’s invitation into the future inspire our imagination. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

For the gospel proclaimed in word and deed, for communities of faith far and near, and for all who show the face of Christ throughout the world, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For creation: sun, moon and stars; life forming in the dark earth and ocean deep; mountains, clouds and storms, and creatures seen and unseen, and for the Holy Spirit’s guidance in our stewardship of God’s creation, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For those responsible for safety and protection: for emergency responders and security guards, attorneys and advocates, civil servants and leaders of governments, that they witness to mercy and justice throughout the world, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For a halt to the pandemic; for all who have contracted Covid-19; for health workers; for the prompt distribution of vaccines; and for all who today will die from the virus. For all who suffer this day (esp.....), that Christ our healer transform sickness into health, loneliness into companionship, bereavement into consolation, and suffering into peace, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For companions on life's journey in this worshiping community, for loved ones who cannot be with us this day, and for guidance during struggles we face, that God's glory is revealed around and among us, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

In thanksgiving for the faithful departed who now rest from their earthly pilgrimage (esp.....) that their lives of service and prayer inspire us in our living, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who swells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Hear us now as we pray the words that Christ has taught us,

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,

thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,

forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

God the creator strengthen you;

Jesus the beloved fill you;

And the Holy Spirit the comforter + keep you in peace.

Amen.

Sending

Go in peace. Be the light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

