

March 17, 2019

Gn 15:5-12,17-18; Phil 3:17-4:1; Lk 9:28b-36

Sometimes we look at things and only see what is on the surface. We see a person who looks strange - we pull back a bit. We see a person who looks like they might be dangerous - we get a little defensive. We see a slick salesman come to us with a big smile, complements us heavily, tells us how awesome what he is trying to sell is, and gives us an offer that looks too good to be true - we get a little suspicious. Well OK maybe you should be suspicious about that last one! But very often the outward appearance does not tell us all we need to know about a person. We need to look deeper at others ... and at ourselves ... in order to find a deeper truth.

What if we could see beyond the surface of other people, what if we could look in the mirror and see the things that we may have failed to look at. What would we see? We may look at the person who looks like they are dangerous yet see beneath a caring person who would lay down their life for a stranger. What if we were to look at the odd person and see the wonderful intelligence and thoughtfulness that makes them beautiful on the inside. What if we were to look at the salesman and see that he is really just trying to be friendly and make a living for his family. Today, three of Jesus' Apostles get to see beyond the surface, they get to see a deeper truth about Jesus. Jesus is "transfigured" which means that his appearance is changed. Peter, James, and John get to see Jesus dressed in dazzling white (relating to many passages in scripture that speak about the one who is the "ancient of days" taking his thrown clothed this way). They see him speaking with Moses and Elijah (Moses representing the Law, and Elijah the prophets). They speak of upcoming events in Jesus' life as if he is the one that the whole Old Testament was pointing to. They hear the voice of the Father say *This is my chosen Son; listen to him*, and they are drawn to reflect on what Jesus has been telling them. Jesus is revealed as the chosen Sone of the Father, who is himself God - the ancient one - the one who's coming was foretold in the law and prophets.

However, what is as important as what the Transfiguration shows us about Jesus, is what it shows us about who we are - and what we can become - as well. Moses and Elijah speak of the *Exodus that [Jesus] was going to accomplish in Jerusalem*. This references the Exodus of the people from Egypt which is a constant theme for us in Lent. It references the day when God came and took his people out of slavery and led them to a promised land (the land that we hear

promised to Abraham in our first reading). The people had been so accustomed to being slaves, that they didn't know what it meant to be free (they had been in slavery for over 400 years). We sometimes do not see the slavery that our sin put us into - we can be blinded by the way we see ourselves and others. Moses and Elijah state that Jesus is going to accomplish another Exodus - another leading of people out of slavery. Only this time it is a leading of all who follow Jesus out of the slavery to sin, and out of the blindness of ignorance, bigotry and hatred.

The story of the transfiguration shows us three things about ourselves. First, that if we are in sin we are not free - we need an Exodus. We need to look beyond the surface as we gaze into the mirror, and see the reality that lies there. A reality of someone who is loved by God, yet still in need of help. Second, it shows that Jesus is the one sent to us to achieve this Exodus - we should all hear the words of the Father ring in our ears *This is my chosen Son; listen to him*, and then follow. Third it shows us what we can become. Jesus in his transfigured state shows us what awaits us if we follow him through that desert of life to that promised land of heaven. Our second reading speaks about the transformation that the faithful can undergo: *Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body*. Seeing Jesus' glorified body gives something to shoot for, something to strive for, something to look to when the going gets tough here in these bodies.

Getting there is not guaranteed; the Israelites who decided to stay as slaves in Egypt would never make it to the promised land. Following Jesus is not always easy, but we must trust in Jesus' words. In the Gospel, the Apostles wanted to stay on the mountain and just hang out with Jesus and heavenly beings (Peter wants to set up a little tent city). But Jesus leads them back down the mountain to the realities of the work to be done as his disciples. In the same way, when we experience special experiences of God's presence we should not expect them to continue indefinitely, nor should we be resentful when they go. God gives us these "mountain experiences" of wonderful days, and of experiences of God's presence to sustain us during the challenges of life. The message today is to look at those times, take from them the promise of what comes to the one who follows Jesus. Then we must work to transform our hearts and minds with God's help, and then follow Jesus out of our slavery to sin so that we can have that final transformation in the life to come. We heard in the first reading that *Abram put his faith in the LORD* that the things promised would come to him if he was faithful ... and so must we.