

## **March 8, 2020**

Gn 12:1-4a; 2 Tm 1:8b-10; Mt 17:1-9

It can be hard to move forward. We get comfortable where we are, we get comfortable in our current situation, with the way we think - we even get comfortable sometimes in our own misery. This is perhaps one of the largest obstacles to happiness in this life - we get stuck and we fail to move forward ... even when where we are is not fulfilling us. Many times we look to solutions by just slightly changing things in the world around us, we think that if I could just get this to go this way or that to be different then all would be better. In the end, we wind up mostly where we were when we started. Today we hear the Lord speaking about a different kind of change - something more radical - where we make a change that is really of a different type.

Difficulties and struggles cannot be avoided in life. No sense expecting that somehow we will escape all of these. The key is that these hardships are the gateway to another sort of freedom that comes from God. We heard in the second reading: *Bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God. He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design.* It is not by our works and our efforts that will bring us to the life God calls us to - it is how we bear and understand the hardships of life, it is how we turn to God in these times and let God lead us through these to a better place. This passage also reminds us that God has a plan and a design - and we will often not see it. A design that brings us to a greater peace and contentment in this life and to an ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ who [we read] *destroyed death and brought life and immortality.* In Lent we turn back to that God who has destroyed eternal death and given us a way to enter a life that is far better than anything we could hope to create here on Earth, and we see how we can follow.

Jesus is crystal clear that we need to walk with him, listen to him, and follow him in order to get there. The voice of the Almighty that comes from the clouds in the Gospel echoes: *This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him* - and those that listen to that voice are led to the place that they cannot reach on their own.

In the first reading we hear Abram receiving a promise from God. But like us, he has to be willing to follow God, he cannot gain the promise without letting God lead the way. God says: *Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you ... and I will bless you.* Abram does begin that journey. He can't see the end goal, he

does not know how to get there, he only has God's word to go on. Look at the great faith of Abram. He left behind all the things that he had planned will bring him happiness and security. It was as hard for him as it would be for us to step outside of our bubble of comfort to something new. He leaves the land that he was comfortable in, he moves away from the earthly family that supported him, he even leaves "his father's house" (a sign that he left behind his inheritance and the property coming to him). He puts all his trust in God, he goes out into the wilderness confident that God would not make a promise if God was not going to fulfill it. Sure there were hard times to come, but in the end God fulfilled his promises as Abram knew he would.

Fast forward to the Gospel. Jesus chooses a few of his closest associates to witness something truly amazing. In the Transfiguration Jesus is seen for who he is. The whiteness of his face and his garments are biblical signs of his divinity and place in heaven. The apostles see Jesus after his resurrection - standing with Moses and Elijah as signs that he is the fulfillment of all that God had spoken through the Law and the Prophets. Jesus is the way to eternal life and they are asked to have the faith of Abram and listen to him and follow. Was this difficult for them - sure - just look at the confusions they had at the crucifixion. They scatter in the Garden, Peter (who is one of the witnesses to the Transfiguration) denies Jesus, they all hide in the upper room holding on to some sense of comfort rather than moving forward following what Jesus spoke to them. We can all be as paralyzed with fear, we can all lack the trust in the words of our Lord, we can be lulled into the false idea that to hold up in our comfortable room will get us anywhere. Our journey is often not to a foreign land, not a big move or radical change of life - it is a journey we make inside ourselves. Changing attitudes, moving from comfortable barriers we have built, opening ourselves to love. This following Jesus in our minds and hearts, as well as in our actions is really a moving forward from many things that hold us back and increase anxiety.

In order to have a greater peace in this life we have to follow the words of Jesus - because he is the real deal, because God does have a plan that can only be reached through trials in life. Because even these trials will be easier when walking with the Lord in mind and action. Abram had to go through the wilderness, the Jews had to cross the desert to get to the promised land, and Jesus had to carry his cross on the way to the resurrection - why would we think it would be any different for us. The good news is that for those who follow, for those who take the risks to go as God directs - there is a path God shows to contentment in this life - and in the next life - something much greater than anything we could plan or construct in our own bubble.