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TRANSFIGURATION

C.S.Lewis wrote in The Weight of Glory :

“It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations.

“It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ‘ordinary’ people.

“You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations --- these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit --- immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.

“This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the

merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously ...”

A tall order in any time, any place. But when we stand with Christ, the impossible becomes all the more natural and do-able --- and reveals Kingdom behavior, Kingdom interactions, Kingdom sights and acts to be the stuff of reality. [Landers]

When Peter and James and John answered their Lords’ “Follow Me” they began transfiguring themselves though they were unaware of what was transpiring. . Jesus began to help them to ‘a new destination’ in life. Occasionally they would forget what they had been told. Occasionally they would fall asleep, not realizing who was speaking to them. Occasionally they would deny or doubt or even betray but it was all in the work of being transfigured as they ‘Listened’ to Jesus.

But whether they were in a storm or trying to figure out how to feed a bunch of folks they didn’t know or trying to protect their friend’s time it was Jesus who would awaken them with a brilliance that only God offers in life. Teaching, healing, exorcising, bringing in a few friends who just happened to be Moses and Elijah. Of course they

wanted to build something to freeze the moment but God does not have time for sitting still and or freezing moments.

Much in our heritage takes place on ‘mountain-tops’ doesn’t it? I went to Church Camp several times as a youngster and it was always on a mountain. East Tennessee is full of them. Christian history is filled with ‘mountain-top experiences.’ There is always the impulse to stay there and never leave the One who loves us most. Martin Luther King said “I have been to the Mountain...” and for believers who love their Lord , those saints of the faith, which is by the way, all us baptized ones, can say that. But a mountain top , dear as it is, is never an end in itself. As Luke shows us they are only the means through which we are better prepared to embody the covenant in the valleys of history. Luke has Jesus praying on mountains himself.

If you read Luke’s Gospel you will notice that right before and right after the story of The Transfiguration there are a couple of rather pedestrian episodes which emphasize the day-to-day reality of Jesus’ ministry. The first is a Passion prediction that explains Messiahship in a very non-Jewish manner , not as a political revolution but in terms of suffering, death and resurrection. The second is an exorcism in which

Jesus exorcises a demon from a suffering child because his apostles were unsuccessful in doing so, reportedly because of a lack of faith. The power of the Transfiguration is grounded by a real Christ who suffers and is incarnately present with those who also suffer. *“As you have done it unto the least of these,”* Jesus would say, *“you have done it unto me.”* Our covenant is fulfilled or broken not on mountain-tops but in the every day commitment to more fully embody the love of Christ.

Lots of tears have been shed leaving mountain-tops. Peter said, *“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we have been eyewitnesses of his majesty....we heard his voice from heaven...”* and they *‘Listened’* and changed the world in the Name of the only One who can/could do so.

Don’t get too comfortable. You and I are just passing through.

The power of Transfiguration today comes to us as we are faithful to Holy Scripture in our worship and study together. God’s *“Listen to Him”* is alive and well to those who will dig deeply into God and self and understand God’s authority spoken to us through the living voice of Holy Scripture.

Recall that Mose's 'shining moment' comes as he carries God's Word to the people. God provides; we are to be those 'sent' , those who carry the living Word to our world. We are the carriers today. If we are not careful, we, like the apostles in last weeks gospel, will find our 'hearts hardened' rather than inspired by the works of God. From feeding 5,000 to walking on water it is God's way to bring his 'light' to bear in such a way that it will feed the world forever. The Transfiguration is that event which galvanizes for Peter and James and John that this One whom they follow is more than just a superhuman but is in fact God incarnate. It was not until after the resurrection that this understanding blossomed in them but when it did they knew what their mission in life was to be. Will we still 'listen to Jesus?' Will you believe Peter when he says "*We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;*"

There are many words of faith that might leave you scratching your head. "Transfiguration" may be one of them but don't let it confuse. It is simply God's touching life and pointing that life where it is intended to go. You come to this mountaintop each Sunday and as you reach out to be washed again in the blood of the living Christ you are charged to go into the world carrying the living Christ with you. As you are 'sent' you leave the mountain-top again. The power of the Old Testament lessons bring Moses and Elijah's ministry to life and the testimony of Peter today is a reminder to 'listen to Jesus' and go be the Church. We are transfigured each week in His Name.

The story of the transfiguration offers access through the gate of the visible to the mystery of the invisible. Embrace the mystery and be a good listener for Christ's message to you this day. Amen.