

Glory Revealed

TR-12, Feb. 19, 2012
Mk. 9:2-9

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Memorial, Afton

Jesus took Peter, James and John up the mountain for a little R and R.

They've been busy feeding thousands,
arguing with Pharisees,
healing the blind,
teaching.

Even Jesus needed some time off.

As the guys were making camp
Jesus stood up and he became "*changed*,"
his clothes *brighter* than any promises of detergent commercials,
"dazzling white,"
whiter and brighter than burning phosphorous.

The Bible greats appeared also,
Elijah the greatest of the prophets
and Moses, the great giver of the law.

Together they represented all the law and prophets of Old Testament scripture.

Elijah never died,
but was assumed into heaven in a whirlwind of fiery chariots.

No one witnessed Moses' death;
he went off onto a mountain
and watched the Chosen People enter the Promised Land,
and no one ever saw him again.

Three Bible greats in one place, discussing, *what* we don't know.

We can speculate.

Maybe they were *sharing recipes*.
Guys do that you know, especially chili recipes and bar-b-que sauce.

And guys can get pretty heated
debating which is better, lump charcoal or briquettes.

You just watch this coming spring!

We don't know *what* Jesus, Moses and Elijah were discussing,
it might not be all serious stuff like the coming kingdom of God
or the Almighty's final act of salvation.

Maybe they were just hanging out.

We don't know.

All we know is Peter and the others got pretty excited.

Standing that close to historical greatness,
being in the presence of best of the best of the best,
they were more excited and swooning
than girls at a Brad Paisley concert.

Peter, in his usual style, shot off his mouth first and used his brain later.

Three "dwellings."
Peter proposed they set up tents so they could stay awhile.
It's the kind of tents that laborers set up in fields at harvest time
so they don't waste time and energy walking back and forth
between home and distant fields each day.

They stay out in the fields until the harvest is done.

Peter suggest they stay on the mountain for a while and enjoy the glory.

Well, they don't know any better.

Moses and Elijah are simply encouraging Jesus for the difficult days ahead.

Jesus is the center of attention.

God overshadows them in a great cloud and tells the disciples
to shut up a moment and listen to Jesus.

When they look around, *only Jesus* is left.
Only Jesus makes any difference.
Only Jesus shall save.

You can imagine the confusion of the three,
 walking in silence, not knowing what to say.
 Jesus orders them to not tell anyone about this event,
 not until he has risen from the dead.
 Like, who's going to believe them if they did tell?
 The next verse after this reading has Peter, James and John even more confused.
 Besides the dazzling white and Biblical greats,
 now they are puzzled about what he means by rising from the dead!

And frankly, *I too* am confused by this whole incident.
 What does dazzling white have to do with anything?
 Why did the gospel writer, Mark, find it necessary to include it?
 The story line would make more sense if the editors just left out the changing thing.

We confess Jesus is God incarnate, God in human flesh.
 Not like a divine hand inside a puppet of humanity,
 but God living as humanity.
 The gospel story is *great drama* if Jesus is seen as a *tragic hero*,
 misunderstood, naïve, holy and good,
 suffering injustice like all those too good for this world.
 If we read the gospel story as Jesus being a very good person,
 we get great drama.

And if we read the story as Jesus as only a *divine god*
 come to dabble with mortal humans,
 we get great *heroic epic*
 of God tampering with humans throughout the eons,
 and finally showing up in person to stir up action.

But we don't have the classic drama or heroic epic.
 We have a *passionate* God who wants to know us so intimately
 that God becomes a *fellow human* in this limited life.
 Jesus transformed
 reminds us that Jesus is no mere human brother,
 but is divine holiness in all its purity and splendor.
 And this gospel story is no mere drama,
 but historical truth of salvation and redemption.
 God did not come as Jesus for entertainment.
 God sent Jesus, came *as* Jesus,
 to meet us humans in a way we can comprehend and believe.
 God came *as* Jesus,
 entered into time and history
 so as to alter history and steer it to salvation.
 God came *as* Jesus
 not waiting for people to repent, turn to God,
 earn their keep, win their right to happiness.
 God *decisively approached* humanity
 because humanity is too bullheaded to seek God.
 The transfiguration of Jesus is a pause in the gospel story
 to remind us of who is Jesus and what Jesus is about,
 as we now prepare for God's dramatic conclusion on the cross.

Wednesday we begin Lent,
a slowing of frenzied life
to remember God,
to recall the mercy and love Jesus demonstrated,
to reorient our priorities and behaviors
to honor the God who made us and delights in us.

This incident on the mountain is a reminder
that Jesus is not simply a friend to pal around with,
and that Jesus is not merely an example
of a good person suffering in a hard world.

This incident on the mountain is a reminder
that the one who is about to be criticized, abused and killed,
that the one humiliated and hated,
is the one and only Almighty Lord of Heaven and Earth.

No other religion has a God who loves us so much
as to give up God's own power and glory and dignity
to meet us person-to-person.

The transfiguration of Jesus holds before us the godliness of Jesus
as we begin the story of Jesus' suffering and death.

May the God who loves you dearly
bless you with assurance
that our Lord cares and holds you fast in protective arms.

Amen.