

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Matt 17:5

From the shining cloud the Father's voice is heard:

This is my beloved Son, hear him.

Gospel Matt 17:1-9; L25A

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother,

and led them up a high

mountain by themselves.

And he was transfigured before them;

his face shone like the sun

and his clothes became white as light.

And behold, Moses and Elijah

appeared to them,

conversing with him.

Then Peter said to Jesus in reply,

"Lord, it is good that we are here.

If you wish, I will make three tents here,

one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

While he was still speaking, behold,

a bright cloud cast a shadow over them,

then from the cloud came a voice that said,

"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate

and were very much afraid.

But Jesus came and touched them, saying,

"Rise, and do not be afraid."

And when the disciples raised their eyes,

they saw no one else but Jesus alone.

As they were coming down from the mountain,

Jesus charged them,

"Do not tell the vision to anyone

until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Reflecting on the Gospel

Last week, temptation; this week, transfiguration. Such contrasts these first two Sundays of Lent offer us! Indeed, more than "the sun" and "white as light" marks the transfiguration of Jesus. This gospel is filled with pairs of words and phrases pointing to the life-giving tension that marks the mystery of Jesus' saving mission. Even the transfiguration account is not only about glory, but includes what

Jesus embraced during his ministry on his journey to glory. The gospel captures the life-giving tension of Jesus' life and our salvation in these

ways: cast a shadow/shown like the sun; much afraid/touched them; fell prostrate/rise; coming down the mountain/up a high mountain; Do not tell/until . . . raised from the dead.

The promise of the gospel—and of Jesus' life—is that we never stop with the first, but always pass over to the second. Dying to self always begets Life.

The radiance of the transfiguration of Jesus overwhelms the disciples and even makes the greatness of Moses and Elijah—symbols for the law and prophets—pale in comparison. It is far easier to embrace glory than take upon ourselves the yoke of discipleship, the demands of faithfully following Jesus, the responsibility of listening and proclaiming the Good News Jesus came to reveal. The call of God to us is the same as that to Peter, James, and John:

we must be willing to leave everything to go where God wills, to accept the self-emptying as a necessary part of being given a share in Jesus' glory, to open ourselves to Jesus' touch of word and care that transforms us into faithful disciples. We must be willing to *listen* to Jesus, learn of his ways, and embrace his paschal journey. Our journey as disciples leads us to eternal glory—foreshadowed by Jesus' transfiguration. This is worth any cost.

"Lord, it is good that we are here." In both temptation and transfiguration we are with Jesus. The promise of the gospel—and of Jesus' life—is that resisting temptation to be other than who we are leads us to a glory that is far greater than the false promise temptation sets before us. Resisting temptation is our journey to transfiguration, our participation in Jesus' own glory. It is our journey into the fullness of Life that conforms us more perfectly to Christ. And, Lord, how good it is that we are here!

Living the Paschal Mystery

Jesus commands the disciples to "Rise, and do not be afraid." The journey of discipleship has its dangers (temptations), but we still venture forth on the journey to eternal glory. We trust in God's guidance (given through law, prophets, teachings of Jesus, Gospel living modeled by others) and surrender ourselves into God's hands. All we need to do is exclaim with Peter, "Lord, it is good that we are here."

We are with Jesus through our own practice of taking some time every day to read God's word in Scripture, through the good modeling of discipleship by another, through the guidance we seek in spiritual direction, through the disciplines we choose for Lent. There are many ways we share in Jesus' glorified Presence. Being here with Jesus means that we keep our eyes focused on the vision of Jesus transfigured and know that God, in great love and divine mercy, intends that we share in that same glory. We cannot lose sight of Jesus himself. "Lord, it is good that we are here."



Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: Lord, it is good that we are here

To the point: Last week, temptation; this week, transfiguration. Such contrasts these first two Sundays of Lent set before us! “Lord, it is good that we are here.” In both temptation and transfiguration we are with Jesus. The promise of the gospel—and of Jesus’ life—is that resisting temptation leads us to a glory that is far greater than the false promise temptation sets before us. Resisting temptation is our journey to transfiguration, our participation in Jesus’ own glory. And, Lord, how good it is that we are here!

Connecting the Gospel

to the second reading: Paul encourages Timothy to “[b]ear your share of hardship for the gospel” and assures him that God will give him the necessary strength. Listening to Jesus means embracing the hardship of giving of self and loving others as he did, the self-emptying and loving that lead to a share in his transfigured glory.

to experience: When we prepare for a journey, we are intent on getting from one place to another. How often do children ask, “Are we there yet?” On our Christian journey toward participating in Jesus’ transfigured glory, the only way we can get there is to walk in his footsteps with him. Are we there yet?

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: Part of the “hardship” we bear as disciples (second reading) is that like Abram (first reading), we must leave behind what we know and love and journey into an unknown future. Part of the blessing of discipleship is that like Peter, James, and John in the gospel we are given glimpses along the way of the glory which is to come. Called to be faithful to the journey and strengthened along the way by flashes of glory, we live in the in-between time of hope.

Our hope, like Abram’s, like Christ’s, like the apostles’, lies in the awareness that the One calling us forward will be faithful to the promise. Through the trudging and the temptations (last Sunday) we see this promise shining through even now, fleeting but with overwhelming clarity (this Sunday). The promise of future glory is real and this merciful God who keeps a tender eye upon us (psalm) grants us the vision we need to keep moving on.

to psalmist preparation: As you sing these verses from Psalm 33 you express the hope fulfilled in the gospel reading. The unseen future to which Abram was called (first reading) is fully manifest in the shining face of Jesus on the mountaintop. You sing of the trust we can hold in the God who promises such a future to us. You are a beacon of hope to the assembly. How can you be this beacon also in your daily living to those who lack hope or need encouragement?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- When I am faced with temptation, the glory of Jesus I glimpse that gives me strength is . . .
- Like Peter, I exclaim “Lord, it is good that [I am] here” when . . .
- The cost of discipleship for me is . . .
The glory is . . .

PRESIDERS

In my busy priestly ministry, what brings me to pause to exclaim “Lord, it is good that [I am] here” is . . .

DEACONS

I have witnessed glimpses of Christ’s glory on the faces of others when . . . My life shines with the glory of Christ for others whenever I . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

My hospitality prepares the assembly members to become present here to the glory of Jesus when I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

Collaborating in the ministry of music offers me a glimpse of Jesus’ glory to which I am called when . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

I walk in the footsteps of Jesus while serving at the altar when I . . .

LECTORS

God’s promise of future blessing (see first reading) directs my daily living in that . . . This moves me along my journey toward participating in Jesus’ glory by . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Eucharist manifests Christ’s glory to me by . . . The way I share this glory with those I meet in my daily life is . . .