

St. Mark 9:2-9

Dear Friends in Christ,

Martin Luther wrote: "Men seek God everywhere: but because they do not seek for him in Christ, they never find him." Well, Jesus said it: "That all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him." (Jn. 5:23)

Luther went on to write:

No man can obtain Christ, the Bread of God, by dint of his own efforts...It is the Father himself who must reveal him, as Christ himself taught, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draws him: and I will raise him up at the Last Day." (*Daily Readings With Martin Luther*, Templegate Publishers, Springfield, Il., 1987, p. 40)

That's what's happening this morning: Three disciples - and us - being drawn to see God's great love in Christ. We're attending . . .

THE MEETING ON THE HIGH MOUNTAIN

I. Putting Pieces Together.

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them... (vv. 2,3)

It's fairly simple. "Transfigured before them...". We don't want to confuse this with what Moses experienced after the Lord spoke to him: "...the skin of Moses' face was shining." (Ex. 34:35) In the case of Jesus this was radiance coming from within. This is the Divine Son of God. He is the eternal Light of unending Life!

Mark reports that this moment took place six days after Jesus "began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again." (Mark 8:31) This meeting on the high mountain was part of the Lord preparing them for the road to Calvary and, strangely enough, draws us to that moment at Gethsemane when we're informed, "And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled." (Mk. 14:33)

Concerning the Transfiguration, it is worth noting, as Luke's Gospel reports, "... Peter and those who were with him (James and John) were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory...". (Lk. 9:32) They fell asleep! Well, let's recall Gethsemane just before the Lord's arrest. "And he took with him Peter and James and John...And he said to them, 'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.'" Well, you know what happened. They fell asleep. And, as you know, though they were overwhelmed by the Transfigured Christ and startled by the wake-up call of Gethsemane, these incidents would not give them the comfort, strength and understanding they needed until that other moment in the Upper Room where the Resurrected Christ entered in spite of the locked doors!

And the point? The Lord puts pieces of life together in ways we can't fathom, but once in place they pull us to our ultimate destiny: Eternal Life! That's the hard part, isn't it? Putting pieces of life together. Trying to make sense out of what sometimes appears to be nonsense. "Why did or does God do this or that?" "Where is this going?" "When will this end?" There are some here neck deep in those kinds of questions! And the words of Scripture declare, "...we know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28) And this: "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." (Prov. 16:9) You see? It's not what we do. It's what God does.

Look at what happens next . . .

II. It All Fits.

And there appeared to them Elijah and Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. (vv. 4-6)

First, there's the reality that the three knew Moses and Elijah without any formal introduction: "Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." What an insight into the instant knowledge we will gain in heaven!

Secondly, the three were given insight regarding what was to come. Luke reports, "Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of (Jesus') departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." And one would think that if they were listening carefully they would have connected that to what had happened before the Transfiguration: "And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected...and be killed, and after three days rise again." (Mk. 8:31) They didn't make the connection at that moment. But, again, the Lord was putting the pieces in place the way He wanted them - just as He does for you and me.

Thirdly, we could ask the question, "Why Moses and Elijah?" While we usually think of Moses as Lawgiver, the fact is the first five books of the Bible, the Books of Moses, clearly shed light on the Gospel. For example, the promise that the Seed of the woman (the Christ) who would bruise Satan's head. Or these words of Moses from Deuteronomy: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you..." (Deut. 18:15) God would raise up a prophet (that's Jesus) like Moses Who would be the Mediator between God and man.

As far as Elijah was concerned, we remember that he was the prophet God used to bring many back to God. And the point of all this? Well, all the pieces fit. In his commentary, Harold E. Wicke writes:

(Moses' and Elijah's) presence also has an important message for us today. It shows that Christianity is not a new religion, a breakaway from the Old Testament faith... It is the continuation and fulfillment. Christianity began in the Garden of Eden and will reach its marvelous climax on Judgement Day. Those who reject Christ actually reject Moses and Elijah, even though they may use their words in their religious ceremonies. Moses and Elijah are on the side of Christ. (Harold E. Wicke, "Mark", The People's Bible, Northwestern Publishing House, p. 127)

And look at what happens next . . .

III. The Voice of Assurance.

And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son, listen to him." And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. (vv. 7,8)

The voice of the Father assured Peter, James and John that Jesus is truly the Son of God. The words, "My beloved Son" assured them that God not only loves His Son but approves His mission. The admonition of "listen to him" underscored that everything Jesus says is truth.

And so, we know that Peter, James and John did not comprehend everything that was unfolding at **The Meeting on the High Mountain**. But, again, Luke reports that after His resurrection "... (Jesus) opened their minds to understand the Scriptures...", specifically, the ones of the Old Testament. (Lk. 24:44,45)

Hopefully, we all get the picture. The Transfiguration would become a source of comfort in spite of what appeared to be one mess after another from the arrest to the crucifixion. The Lamb of God would do all things necessary to earn forgiveness of every sin and secure the promise of eternal life!

In spite of life's turbulence - The Voice of Assurance speaks to us. During this coming Lenten Season we will once again march to the Cross with Jesus. Throughout the journey we should recall the Father's words: "This is my beloved Son, listen to him." And that echos the word the Father spoke at Jesus' baptism: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." The Father is pleased with Him. Consequently, through faith in Christ the Father is pleased with us. My dear mutually sinful brothers and sisters, we must hear that - daily.

The Meeting on the Mountain sets the course to Calvary. There to address lives shattered and shaken by the on-going struggle with sin and living in this world - the guilt - the memories we don't want to remember; you know, your life, my life. The promise doesn't change: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1)

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

Transfiguration

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St. Mark 9:2-9: “The Meeting on the High Mountain”

I. Putting Pieces Together.

II. It All Fits.

III. The Voice of Assurance.

*Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2155 North Oakland Avenue
Decatur, Illinois 62526*