

2.14.21 Transfiguration: The Beloved Son of Transfiguration and Cross – Mark 9:2-9

- The more scripture you remember from Sunday School, from church services, and from your own reading – the more scripture that you remember, the more today's gospel reading of the transfiguration of Jesus sounds like a big MASH UP of biblical images
 - Jesus took several of his disciples up a high mountain – but remember, long before, Moses went up Mount Sinai and a few times he took some of his leaders with him
 - Jesus' clothes became dazzling light – whiter than any clothing on earth. But hundreds of years earlier when Moses came down from visiting God on the mountain, HIS face and clothes also glowed from being in the presence of the glory of God
 - Then in today's gospel reading the disciples saw the two greatest prophets from their peoples' past – Moses and Elijah – speaking to Jesus. Jesus on the mountain being transfigured before the very eyes of Peter, James and John – Jesus was in the elite company of the two prophets of old who were so beloved by God, that God buried Moses in a place only known to God, and Elijah was taken directly to heaven instead of dying on earth... and the disciples saw Jesus speaking with THEM
 - And then a cloud overshadowed all of them on this high mountain, like the cloud that had guided the people through the wilderness after God had set them free from Egypt, and then that cloud of old had settled on Mount Sinai to remind the people of the nearby, yet concealed-from-their-eyes presence of God
 - Then finally in the today's story the voice of God spoke from the cloud telling Peter, James and John that Jesus was nothing less than God's beloved Son – like Abraham's beloved son Isaac, and later David, the both troubled and beloved king of Israel long before
- Yes, the transfiguration is a mash up of biblical images – a holy mountain, dazzling light, honored prophets, the cloudy-but-obscured presence of God, and the beloved Son of God, but WHY?

- WHY are all these biblical images brought together to surround and point to Jesus, for Peter, James and John to see?
- And WHY has this biblically deep scene been preserved in scripture for us to hear so many years later?
- The television show Jeopardy can help us
 - You probably know about the gameshow Jeopardy
 - Contestants are given the answer, and they have to figure out the question. So for instance, if the answer given is “The middle name of your pastor,” the question is, “What is Reed?”
- Now let’s go back to the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus.
 - If this story is an answer to a question, what would that question be?
 - Well it’s pretty easy to come up with the question – all we have to do is open our Bibles and read what came before this story.
 - And what came immediately before this story is that Jesus asked his disciples who they thought Jesus might be?
 - And a few said one of the prophets, and another said maybe Elijah, and yet another said John the Baptist raised from the dead... but then Peter said, “You are the Messiah!” Or in the Greek language, “You are the Christ!”
 - But after that we hear, “Then [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, [Jesus] rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.’” [Mark 8:31-33]
 - And then, just a few verses later, comes today’s story of the transfiguration
 - The question was, “if Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, then surely he will not suffer, die, and then be raised, will he?”
 - And in the transfiguration of Jesus, God’s answer is, “YES, suffering and death, cross and resurrection

is EXACTLY WHAT it means for Jesus to be my beloved Son.”

- And then, on the mountain, flanked by prophets, clothes dazzling with light, and covered by a cloud, the voice of God said to Peter, James, and John, LISTEN TO HIM! LISTEN TO JESUS THE BELOVED SON OF GOD!
- And indeed, Jesus went on to suffer and to die, and there at the cross after he had been abandoned by his disciples, the irony is that it was the Roman officer who had overseen Jesus’ execution who blurted out these prophetic words, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”
- The transfiguration with all of its biblical images of God’s glory that wrap Jesus in his transfiguration affirms and answers the question both back then and now, “did Jesus REALLY come here to die?” And the answer is YES
- These days, and in every generation, so many people and so many voices have ignored what it means for Jesus to be the Son of God
 - So for instance, Jesus the beloved Son of God did not come here to make us successful or wealthy. Jesus came to die for us.
 - Jesus the beloved Son of God did not come to this world to be a great moral teacher, so that if we follow the rules, obey the law, and live good lives, then we will become friends with Jesus – no, Jesus came to suffer and to die, so that would not die forever
 - Jesus the beloved Son of God did not come to God’s creation in order to show favor for any particular people or nation, especially considering that Jesus was crucified by the dominant nation and rejected by most of the occupied nation – no Jesus came to take our sin on himself, and to suffer and die innocently, so that we the guilty, would not die in sin, but instead, die with the promise of Christ’s empty, broken-open tomb for our future
- Today’s gospel is a mash up of biblical images that answers and affirms that Jesus the Messiah and Son of God came to suffer and died and be raised.
- Jesus was transfigured for Peter, James and John to see and hear, and later for us to hear as well, so that in all the clamor of voices that try to make Jesus into something else, the voice of

God continues to say, "This is my Son, the Beloved, listen to him"... listen to him as he goes first to the cross, and then to the tomb that could not hold him.