

The Last Sunday of Epiphany B 2015

The Gospel proclaims a scene of high drama today. The site, a high mountain top; the characters: Jesus, (suddenly a-glow in dazzling brightness); Peter, James and John; Moses, the supreme law-giver of Israel, and Elijah the first and greatest of the prophets.

If not awestruck enough, the disciples are engulfed in a cloud and the very voice of God saying, “This is my beloved Son, Listen to Him!” (Wow! Hollywood special effects could visualize for us a spectacular picture indeed.)

But then the mystical moment passed as suddenly and quickly as it had come, and the four men simply return to their ministry. But for a moment in the luminescence of Jesus face they saw God’s beloved, God’s chosen One.

The significance of this event emerges from the “voice from the cloud.” God’s voice is heard only twice in the St. Mark’s Gospel: at Jesus’ baptism and at his transfiguration. Both times God identifies Jesus as the Beloved; first as the one with whom he is “well pleased” and second as THE one to “listen to.” Certainly, the disciples shouldn’t have any doubts about the teachings and examples of Jesus. Surely, anyone who follows and obeys this Jesus will also be pleasing to God.

This glorious manifestation episode is set in the midst of Jesus’ three passion and resurrection predictions. Jesus discloses the disgrace and abuse that was about to be inflicted on him, but God discloses the honor that belongs to Jesus the Son —an honor that would remain undiminished in the Passion and be vindicated in the Resurrection.

We are learning that although the path of discipleship may lead into conflict with the values of the world, nevertheless that path stands approved by God. In this story we are given assurance that our hope for entering God’s kingdom is real.

It is so amazing that when we encounter the presence of God, things are suddenly put into a deeper, broader, or newer perspective and understanding. Like the disciples, we want to sustain the experience and bask in the awesomeness of God. For a moment you are lifted above all worrisome things, embraced in the loving arms of the Divine Lover of Souls.

Yet more is to come, everything the disciples have seen so far, the mountain vista from the heights, the dazzling brightness, the heavenly visitors, the cloud of meeting, is miraculously imprinted forever in their minds when they hear the voice of God. Already terrified, they are stunned into silence upon hearing God speak.

I suggest, terrified or humbled, they kept quiet. Then God whispered to them in that still small voice Elijah had heard on his own mountain top when the Lord passed by. Or was it the same voice that called Moses to take off his shoes and approach the burning bush? Was it a soothing, loving voice, perhaps like a mother’s lullaby, or a

father humming his cradled child, or your own beloved speaking softly, speaking intimately.

In the stillness they hear God. Can it be that we must be still to hear God as well? Even more wondrous, can it be that in God's heart, each of us is the beloved of God too?

You see, each of us are loved divinely not because we are perfect, or obedient, but because we are God's children. If we are beloved, we are affirmed, we are special, we matter. We are wanted, pursued, coveted by a loving God no matter what, no matter when, no matter why. Loved —Always!

There is great power in such awareness, such knowledge. Being beloved brings the ability to reach out beyond self since you are of great value. You are so very special on account of having been affirmed by God. You can be confident, secure as you journey through all the ups and downs of life. You do not have to be anxious or fearful because you are beloved.

The Transfiguration came to an end. Once again the veil was drawn. The cloud disappeared, Heavenly visitors were gone. Jesus spoke clearly and they begin their descent down towards Jerusalem and the passion and death that awaited their master.

They were blind, but now they could see. God's salvation was at hand. But now they knew it was true.
Jesus is indeed the Way, The Truth and the Light. Amen.