

Last Sunday after the Epiphany

February 14, 2021

Year B RCL

2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6; Mark 9:2-9

“This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”

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Today is the last Sunday after Epiphany before we enter the season of Lent. We hear in the gospel of Mark, the story of the transfiguration which stands as a transition between the progressive revelation of Jesus in his announcement of the good news and the journey of Lent ending at the cross. It is clear that the narrative of the gospel and the liturgy want to share with the readers a powerful perception of the glory in the transfiguration story before the painful story of the passion and death of Jesus.

Seems to be that the gospel is teaching a lesson for our own journey of faith; before the glory and before any reward, our own personal conversion and painful sacrifice is needed. There is not access to God’s Kingdom without the suffering of the cross. We should be mindful that in the society of comfort where

there is not any space for the cross, we Christians need to read the gospel with the understanding that its values are always counter cultural like in this passage of the gospel, where we taste the glory in the transfiguration (transformation) of Jesus as preamble to his passion.

The first Sunday after Epiphany, we celebrated the Baptism of our Lord and we heard in the Gospel of Mark (Chapter 1:4-11) at the conclusion, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

In today's gospel, Mark's highpoint is similar; we hear the voice of God saying in Chapter 9:7, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!"

"This is my Son," is an expression where God clearly links His relationship with Jesus. We find this testimony of our Father two times in the Gospel: in the baptism, and now in the transfiguration story.

There is another moment after Jesus death when a Roman centurion says about Jesus: "*Truly this man was God's Son!*" (15:39).

These three times that we find the designation of Jesus as the "Son of God" is in an atmosphere of revelation about Jesus' very identity. This time in the transfiguration story, select witnesses heard the voice from the cloud and had the opportunity to confirm that the dazzling white clothes, the presence of Moses and Elijah, and the change of Jesus aspect glowing all prove to them that

they are in front of the mystery of God. This is a reminder also that the divinity of God in Jesus is manifested before the crucifixion.

For us believers, this story of the transfiguration before Lent and later during the liturgical year after Pentecost is an invitation to be the church with a boldness that follows the Master in the journey of the cross with obedience and humility. Because the cross is more than the six weeks of Lent and each one of us is called to become a more faithful disciple each day, the glory is manifested as an incentive and invitation to persevere amidst obstacles.

“Listen to him!” (Mark 9:7). It is a direct order coming from God’s voice. This imperative is as current as it was the day that this episode happened. The request continues to be the same, to listen to God in Jesus His Son. Even if the disciples are overwhelmed with the whole experience, the central point now becomes a demand from God. In this part of the gospel, we like these selected witnesses share the same difficulties in listening to Jesus.

The whole Christian life is a learning experience of listening and in the Bible, listening is also associated with obedience. The less we listen, the more we are far away from the true gospel, and the more we follow our own voice produces false comfort. The disciples then and now are called to become more cruciform

following Jesus example. Listening to God in Jesus absolutely brings the cross. For this reason, God shows His glory, to anticipate that the life of obedience is well worth it even if it seems difficult.

The Father never abandons or forgets His children, he proves this while he was supporting and accompanying Jesus in his passion and death. God is and will be always with us as we carry the cross. The fact that in the transfiguration story, we contemplate the glory of the future and see the glow and shining light in Jesus' face and body, shows that even during Lent, we are walking with Jesus and we are never alone or in darkness.

The mountaintop experience with God as we learn from this gospel is an opportunity to enjoy and share. Even if the disciples do not yet understand as they progress in their journey of faith walking with Jesus, they will eventually comprehend. It is the same for us, we need to listen to Jesus and keep going, keep carrying our cross in faith knowing that the glory of God is waiting for us. Amen.