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Transfiguration

Dear Readers,

We are about to enter the season of Lent. Lent is that time that comes before Easter---it is a season of preparation and of penitence. For centuries Lent was a time when people were diligent about preparation for Baptism as all Baptism happened early on Easter morning.

In fact, baptism took place on Easter morning as a way of symbolizing that it is in that Sacrament that we understand we die to sin and are resurrected to a new life. So, as Jesus is raised, we see in him our own resurrection.

Lent was the time of preparation and a time of self examination and learning. This year the season of Lent begins this coming Wednesday with Ash Wednesday.

This story of the Transfiguration always comes right before we begin the season of Lent. In fact, there are some who would argue that this is a post-resurrection story. While I can see some validity to the argument it is not at all coincidental that all the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke---all of them place this story just at the position before Jesus' ministry shifts and the journey towards Jerusalem and the cross begins.



I see this story coming to us here at the beginning of the Lenten journey as this wonderful mystery. We are not accustomed to seeing Transfigurations take place or prophets ascending in fiery chariots. Those things are not part of our usual experience. Well, not per say.

What is the message? What is the message for Elisha as he is left standing there on Jordan's banks with Elijah firing off in the chariot? What is the message? Well if we read farther along, we find out that he picks up the mantel, places it on his shoulders, and is filled with the Spirit. God is with him!

What is the message? What is the message for Jesus? There he is about to start the journey that leads to his death---and there the voice comes. The proclamation from God comes loud and clear to him---"This is my Son, the Beloved, listen to him!" What does that sound like? It



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sounds just like the voice that we heard at the Baptism of Jesus, "this is my Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

You see here, right here, as Jesus is about to begin the journey that leads to death the voice comes---the message is loud and clear: "my Son" and "the Beloved." God is with him—and not in some tangential or peripheral way—God is right there in the middle of this with him.

What is the message? What is the message for Peter, and James, and John? There they are, and they have been invited along to witness first-hand this amazing event and this glorious mystery. They see first-hand what is happening and how Jesus is transformed and transfigured. What is the message?

The message is they are included---the message is God is inviting them. The message is clear that this mystery, this holiness, this awesomeness that is God is for them and with them and is theirs. It is theirs up there in the mountain when they can feel the presence of God as near as their own heartbeat. But, that same presence of God is their for them as they face the dark night---there when they will deny the Christ—that presence of God is still with them.

You see, you see as we go into Lent we go into life. God's presence is with us. It is with us in this thrill ride that is life. Sometimes life is wonderful and glorious, but at other times it hard and frightening. In that, and in those difficult times---God is still present with us.

Blessings,
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