

Weekly Devotional

For the week of February 14, 2010



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We are a listening church

Being inspired by Christ as we hear the Bible speak in its historical context

Bible Background

We all hold onto certain core assumptions that go a long way in determining the way we think about life - from politics, to faith, to raising children, and even to the best way we should organize dirty dishes into the dishwasher. Perhaps the most critical core question when it comes to faith is whether we are called to *engage* into the world or *disengage* from it. Unless we bring our pre-conceived ideas to light, we may miss what scripture is trying to tell us.

This week's gospel lesson features a dramatic picture of Jesus having a conversation on a mountain with Moses and Elijah, two long-dead heroes of the Jewish people. If we assume that God calls us to *disengage* from the world, then this "transfiguration" (where the appearance of Jesus is transformed to one we might consider other-worldly) tells us that it is our job to wait for God to do the same for us. We recognize the grace of God in the hope that someday we, too, will be transfigured—and then disappear.

If, however, we assume that God calls us to *engage* more fully into the world, then what scripture can say to us here is entirely different. Immediately before this story, Jesus has just finished telling the disciples that suffering is a part of the Christian life, and they are *not to run away from it*. Immediately after this story, Jesus and the disciples come down the mountain and encounter a crowd that is in need of healing. Now, the transfiguration experience can be understood in a radical new (or perhaps very old) way. Peter wishes to stay on the mountain with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, but as soon as Peter expresses this wish, the voice from heaven tells Peter to listen to Jesus, who then leads them back down the mountain to the waiting crowds.

What, then, is the transfiguration all about? It helps us to see the way that God is transforming the very world we live in—from something glorious (and flawed) to a new degree of glory. Paul writes about this in the second letter to the Corinthians: *"...all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit."*

Paul goes on to say that the grace of God that is transforming us calls us to engage into the world: *"Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart."* No doubt, we all have days where we want to stay on the mountaintop. Jesus, however, leads us back down the mountain every time. The crowds are waiting.

Question for reflection

At a basic level, we understand that we are either called to engage into the world, or disengage from it. What difference does the theology that we hold make to the people of Haiti, who have just experienced a terrible earthquake?

We are a learning church

Learning to love and serve with all people by drawing upon the resources of our culture, the arts, and the stories of our own lives

Quotes for the week

"Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away."
(Philip K. Dick)

"Illusions commend themselves to us because they save us pain and allow us to enjoy pleasure instead. We must therefore accept it without complaint when they sometimes collide with a bit of reality against which they are dashed to pieces."
(Sigmund Freud)

"Few people have the imagination for reality."
(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)

"Every time I close the door on reality,
it comes in through the windows."
(Jennifer Yane)

"You know you're in love when you can't fall asleep
because reality is finally better than your dreams."
(Dr. Seuss)

"Sometimes I'm confused by what I think is really obvious,
but what I think is really obvious obviously isn't obvious..." (Michael Stipe)

"I have a very firm grasp on reality!
I can reach out and strangle it any time!"
(Anonymous)

Question for reflection

What kind of experience does it take for a person to re-examine and reconsider their core assumptions about life and reality?

Scriptures

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First reading: **2 Corinthians 3:17-4:2**

From: The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.

Gospel: **Luke 9:28-37**

From: The Message

About eight days after saying this [telling the disciples not to run away from suffering], Jesus climbed the mountain to pray, taking Peter, John, and James along. While he was in prayer, the appearance of his face changed and his clothes became blinding white. At once two men were there talking with him. They turned out to be Moses and Elijah—and what a glorious appearance they made! They talked over his exodus, the one Jesus was about to complete in Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, Peter and those with him were slumped over in sleep. When they came to, rubbing their eyes, they saw Jesus in his glory and the two men standing with him. When Moses and Elijah had left, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, this is a great moment! Let's build three memorials: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He blurted this out without thinking.

While he was babbling on like this, a light-radiant cloud enveloped them. As they found themselves buried in the cloud, they became deeply aware of God. Then there was a voice out of the cloud: "This is my Son, the Chosen! Listen to him." When the sound of the voice died away, they saw Jesus there alone. They were speechless. And they continued speechless, said not one thing to anyone during those days of what they had seen.

When they came down off the mountain the next day, a big crowd was there to meet them.