

Today is a very important day. Not only is it a Sunday, to be celebrated as a holy day in commemoration and celebration of our Lord's resurrection, but it is also the last Sunday of the Epiphany, the close of the three seasons that mark the incarnation of Jesus. Advent, Christmas and Epiphany will soon give way to the season of Lent, where we as a church change pace, slow down, not only become more reflective (as we did in Advent) but more *penitent*.

Can we, as a people of God, still relate to what happened up there on that mountain? Jesus is transfigured. The skies open up again, God is revealed in all of God's glory. The heavens open up and Jesus' clothing becomes dazzling white, "such as no one on earth can bleach them." Jesus becomes someone, something different than he was. This event is one in a series of events wherein God is showing us what and who Jesus actually is; you know, we mortals need a lot of pointers.

We often need a lot of cues, markers, and examples, to lead us to what is holy. To what in our own lives does this event, which happened so very long ago, relate? What meaning does it have for us today? What can it DO for us? What can we GET from listening to this Gospel? Where is the Good News here?

“Listen to him”, we hear repeated in various places in the New Testament. Listen to him. We hear it at Jesus’ Baptism. The phrase “listen to him” in this case carries the Old Testament connotation of “obey” as well as that of paying attention. Through our own Baptismal Covenant, we not only accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, we say that we will “listen to him.” And we also hear it at the wedding at Cana, when Jesus’ mother tells the servants to do whatever he asks of them. Listen to him, she says.

The Transfiguration is not something that happened to Jesus alone. Can we dare to think that it is something that also can happen to us? That we too can have our own lives changed, transformed, by the power of the living God? That there really is a powerful, living God Almighty that can change our lives?

We all have had some darkness in our lives. Each one of us has gone through painful events. We have all experienced fear, sickness, loss and sin. Each one of us has desperately needed the power of the living God to come into our hearts to heal our own sufferings and the sufferings of our loved ones.

And each one of us has, through Jesus, been given the opportunity to shed light into those dark places, until such time as that day dawns and the Morning Star rises in our hearts. It is fitting that the season of Epiphany concludes with this light shining on the mountain top, having begun with that star leading the three

wise men to the place where the Light, Jesus, first came into our world by his very birth.

We read along in Mark's Gospel that this Morning Star, Jesus, this prophecy comes not by our human will, but by "men and women who are moved by the Holy Spirit spoke by God."

We can relate to the disciples when they witnessed this great event. Peter, James, and John were not just invited into the mystery of the person of Jesus; they were also called to listen and obey. Sometimes we, like them, want the feeling of awe and wonder to stay with us all of the time. "Let's stay up here on the mountaintop. We can build our homes here, far away from all of the problems of the world."

But, of course, life doesn't work that way. We are given memory for magnificent experiences, and we are given opportunities to create new holy experiences as well. The voice of God from the clouds declares, "This is my Son, the beloved, with him I am well pleased, LISTEN TO HIM!"

We bring our gifts to the altar. This is where we become transformed- by the power of the Holy Spirit. The ordinary bread and wine are changed by the mystery of God into the Body and Blood of Christ. Are we able; are we strong enough to realize what power we are given here each week?

When I read this passage I resonate with the part of the story where God calls out to the small crowd and says “this is my son, the Beloved;” Because, I think, that it means that I am also beloved, and all of us believers are beloved. This Gospel does have meaning for us today. This Jesus is that light that shines in through our darkness. This son, God’s son, is *our* beloved, he is in us and we are in him.

Because of him, we are given the power to withstand whatever the world dishes out. We are given the power to let go of those things that hold us back, those things that bind us and keep us from being all that God intends us to be; to achieve our full potential. We are also transformed, we are also beloved. And we do have the power to change and improve our lives, our community, and yes, even the future of the whole world. Really. This is the Good News.

Next Wednesday, we begin our journey through Lent. We will be reviewing and reflecting on our shortcomings. As we slowly move slowly and intentionally move toward the Cross, let us also hold fast and remember that we too are God’s beloved. And that because we have been given this gift, we can change our lives and do more of the things that God has given us to do.

