

Transfiguration C

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm 99

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-43

Rev. Trish Schmermund

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Edmonton

February 10, 2019

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, amen.

Are you awestruck? This two-sided reading gives us ample opportunity to be amazed. And each side is unique and different, offering us glimpses of the enormity and diversity and depth of God. Clearly, we are hearing stories that describe both the humanity and the divinity of Christ.

Let's start with the Transfiguration story which is a full on, special effects, Hollywood style, name dropping coronation for Jesus. It's a story that harkens back to Moses' own experience of seeing God and his face became radiant! A story that Jewish listeners would have known well (we heard a part of this in the Exodus text today.)

Luke is building on that well known history. First of all, he leaves no room for question or doubt that Jesus might be some sort of the new Moses or Elijah 2.0. These men are both pillars of the Jewish faith. Moses led the people out of slavery in Egypt and taught them the 10 Commandments (which is a too-brief summary of his ministry.) An Elijah – have you ever been for dinner somewhere and there was an extra place setting and someone said “it's for Elijah,” or “set a place for “Elijah?” That's because it was anticipated that Elijah (who didn't die but was swept up into heaven) would one day return. In placing them side by side with Jesus in the story, Luke is preempting any correlation that Jesus is one of them; Jesus is Jesus.

And in doing so, Luke affirms the divinity, the godliness of Jesus. He's not just a super-faithful disciple. He's not a really spiritual guy. He is 100% Son of God as the heavenly voice declared. Which means he's not just a prophet, king, physician or any other label we might want to attach. He's fully divine, fully God. And pretty spectacular all in all.

Ok, so that all happens up on the mountain and the next day they *come down* and encounter the distraught father. We are literally getting “down to earth” here. Luke understands how difficult it is to comprehend, never mind relate to, a Savior like that described at the mountain top. Sure it's nice to imagine, it makes a great story, but how does *that* Jesus make a difference for us regular people down here?

Down here, we can't keep things clean never mind radiant. We'd like to think that we're good people, but then there's this problem that we keep messing up. We make promises we don't follow through on. We are afraid to face our histories of abuse, racism and inequality. We fight with our loved ones, say things we regret, and leave undone things we know we ought to do. We know we hoard too much stuff while others

don't have enough. We know our environment is going to pot. We know... we need help.

But, we are never helpless.

And this is an important lesson from this story of healing. Sometimes, in all honesty, we'd prefer the dazzling Christ on the mountain. Like Peter, if we could, we stay there day in, day out. The idea of a God who leaves us spellbound is enticing, but if that the kind of God we're hoping for we'll need to keep looking. This God is One of participation.

Before Jesus went up the mountain to pray we find the story of Jesus feeding the 5000. If you recall from that story, the disciples recognize that the crowd would be getting hungry and they ask Jesus to send them away so they can get something to eat. Jesus, however, turns things around and asks the disciples to feed them. Perplexed, they wondered where to get enough food on such short notice. They couldn't see past the possibilities they knew and understood. God was with them, making all things possible and they didn't get it.

After the Transfiguration they are given another chance, this time to heal a young boy. The story simply says they couldn't do it. They were still not able to put together all they had been learning and experiencing. That's why Jesus is so frustrated. They kept thinking in worldly terms, kept imagining that they had to somehow accomplish things by miracles or wondrous power or wait for Jesus to do it.

But is Christ only interested in being some sort of miracle-on-demand-god? Even as I ask the question, we all know the answer is "no;" God is interested in partnering with us to change the world.

Now, that's a tall order, but let's bring it down-to-earth, to everyday means that we can understand. No one is imaging here that you or I have to go out and clear the shelves of Superstore to feed the hungry for example. So how do we get very practical and begin to make change that betters our and other's lives?

Well, if you're willing to try an experiment with me, I'd ask you to do one thing this week. It's not giving more or reading the Bible every day. I'm not even going to ask you to pray each day or give to someone in need. I know you already do amazing acts of service and kindness. But try this: in the everyday ordinary things you do, whether it's picking up groceries or the kids at school, if it's on your commute to work or home, perhaps in a quiet moment in the middle of the day or maybe a stressful one where you aren't sure where to turn, ask yourself this question: "Where is God in this?"

It's in the pause to ask the question that a new way of seeing is revealed. And I guarantee you, God is there. You may be surprised to learn how, because it likely isn't in

the form of smoke and clouds or a heavenly voice, but it may be in the laughter of a friend, a deep conversation with a loved one, the help of a stranger. You may realize God is in the meal provided at your table, in the gift of employment or the beauty of nature. As you might imagine, it's limitless. It would be great to hear some of your thoughts/stories – or post them to our Facebook page, phone or email them in.

It could be quite an adventure – no mountaintop required! Amen.