



Gospel Mk 9:2-10

This is my Son, the beloved; listen to him.

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his clothes became dazzlingly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them. Elijah appeared to them with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Rabbi,' he said 'it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say; they were so frightened. And a cloud came, covering them in shadow; and there came a voice from the cloud, 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.' Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them any more but only Jesus.

As they came down from the mountain he warned them to tell no one what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They observed the warning faithfully, though among themselves they discussed what 'rising from the dead' could mean.

Reflection by Greg Sunter

Like so many other important events in the Bible, the events of this week's gospel occur on a high mountaintop. Mountaintops were places of special and dramatic encounter with God and the disciples' experience of the transfiguration is clearly no exception! In this instance, the disciples suddenly see Jesus' power fully revealed but they fail to fully understand what is going on. One might think how much more obvious could God be about trying to reveal Jesus' identity to the disciples, but still they don't really catch on. Peter thinks he has caught on to the message. When the great prophets Elijah and Moses appear beside Jesus, Peter understands Jesus to be part of the line of prophets in the Hebrew tradition. He believes he has had a great insight and is so impressed that he wants to remain on the mountaintop – setting up tents in honour of Jesus, Elijah and Moses. In essence, Peter has still only partially understood who Jesus is. He thinks he is the Messiah, but a Messiah in the same mould as the prophets of old, a prophet of the old tradition. He has not understood that Jesus is breaking that mould and creating a new vision, a new tradition – one that is endorsed by the voice of God on the mountaintop.

Rather than allowing the disciples to set up tents and remain in the 'high' of this experience, Jesus immediately leads the boys back down the mountain. This is perhaps the greatest message of this passage: that life is not lived on the mountaintop but back down in the valley. Although the mountaintop experience may have provided some new insight and new energy, it is back down in the valley that the world waits; that the real work needs to be done; that the sick and the poor are crying out for God's love and mercy.

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The Living Word

Second Sunday of Lent, Year B

28 February 2021

First Reading Gn 22:1-2, 9-13, 15-18

The sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith.

God put Abraham to the test. 'Abraham, Abraham,' he called.' Here I am' he replied. 'Take your son,' God said 'your only child Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him as a burnt offering, on a mountain I will point out to you.'

When they arrived at the place God had pointed out to him, Abraham built an altar there, and arranged the wood. Then he bound his son Isaac and put him on the altar on top of the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand and seized the knife to kill his son.

But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven. 'Abraham, Abraham' he said. 'I am here' he replied. 'Do not raise your hand against the boy' the angel said. 'Do not harm him, for now I know you fear God. You have not refused me your son, your only son.' Then looking up, Abraham saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. Abraham took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son.

The angel of the Lord called Abraham a second time from heaven. 'I swear by my own self – it is the Lord who speaks – because you have done this, because you have not refused me your son, your only son, I will shower blessings on you, I will make your descendants as many as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore. Your descendants shall gain possession of the gates of your enemies. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, as a reward for your obedience.'

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 115:10, 15-19. R. 114:9

(R.) I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living.

1. I trusted, even when I said: 'I am sorely afflicted.' O precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful. (R.)
2. Your servant, Lord, your servant am I; you have loosened my bonds. A thanksgiving sacrifice I make: I will call on the Lord's name. (R.)
3. My vows to the Lord I will fulfil before all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem. (R.)

Second Reading Rom 8:31-34

God did not spare his own Son.

With God on our side who can be against us? Since God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up to benefit us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that he will not refuse anything he can give. Could anyone accuse those that God has chosen? When God acquits, could anyone condemn? Could Christ Jesus? No! He not only died for us – he rose from the dead, and there at God's right hand he stands and pleads for us.

Gospel Acclamation Mt 17:5

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ! From the shining cloud, the Father's voice is heard:

this is my beloved Son, hear him.

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!