

# Sunday, February 19, 2012

## Transfiguration of Our Lord

### INTRODUCTION

*The Sundays after Epiphany began with Jesus' baptism and end with three disciples' vision of his transfiguration. In Mark's story of Jesus' baptism, apparently only Jesus sees the Spirit descending and hears the words from heaven. But now Jesus' three closest friends hear the same words naming him God's beloved son. As believers, Paul writes, we are enabled to see the God-light in Jesus' face, because the same God who created light in the first place has shone in our hearts to give us that vision. The light of God's glory in Jesus has enlightened us through baptism and shines in us also for others to see.*

### How Good to Be Here

Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to a mountaintop. "Rabbi," Peter says, "it is good for us to be here." Don't you love Peter? Even when, as Mark writes, Peter "did not know what to say," he blurts out something (Mark 9:5-6).

Actually, Peter was right. It was good for the three disciples to witness the exhilarating, terrifying mountaintop events. They were given a preview of Jesus, the resurrected Christ. As it was happening, they couldn't possibly understand—or stand—the fullness of what they were witnessing. On the mountaintop, it was time to experience. Later, on the way down the mountain, there was time to ponder the meaning of what had just happened.

It was especially good for Jesus to be there. He had tried to prepare the disciples for what was ahead, but they weren't getting it. Jesus understood all too well. Did Jesus wonder if he himself could stand the fullness of what was ahead? How good it must have been for Jesus to talk with Elijah and Moses. Did Jesus ask questions? Was he given advice? How good it must have been for Jesus to hear the Father call him "my Son, the Beloved" (Mark 9:7). Jesus had heard those very words before, following his baptism by John and right before his wilderness test (Mark 1:9-12). This affirmation of his identity fed Jesus in the wilderness and sustained him as he journeyed to the cross.

We can take heart from the lessons Peter, James, and John remembered as they came down from the mountain. It is good to have a mountaintop faith experience. Ask anyone who has sung hymns in four-part harmony at a large gathering of Lutherans. Ask anyone who has global neighbors as a missionary or faithful traveler. The blessing of the moment is to experience. The blessing of reflection is to understand. The take-away blessing of the mountaintop is sustenance for journey in the valley.

### PRAYER OF THE DAY (ELW)

Almighty God, the resplendent light of your truth shines from the mountaintop into our hearts. Transfigure us by your beloved Son, and illumine the world with your image, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

### FIRST READING: 2 Kings 2:1–12

*Today's reading centers on the transfer of power and authority from the prophet Elijah to Elisha. Their travels, which retrace the path of Joshua back to Moab (the place where Moses died) and the parting of the waters, demonstrate that Elisha and Elijah are legitimate successors of the great prophet Moses.*

Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. <sup>2</sup>Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. <sup>3</sup>The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the

LORD will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent." <sup>4</sup>Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. <sup>5</sup>The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent." <sup>6</sup>Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. <sup>7</sup>Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. <sup>8</sup>Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground. <sup>9</sup>When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." <sup>10</sup>He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." <sup>11</sup>As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. <sup>12</sup>Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

### **PSALM (ELW): Psalm 50:1–6**

*Out of Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth in glory. (Ps. 50:2)*

<sup>1</sup>The mighty one, God the LORD, has spoken; calling the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

**<sup>2</sup>Out of Zion, perfect in its beauty, God shines forth in glory.**

<sup>3</sup>Our God will come and will not keep silence; with a consuming flame before, and round about a raging storm.

**<sup>4</sup>God calls the heavens and the earth from above to witness the judgment of the people.**

<sup>5</sup>"Gather before me my loyal followers, those who have made a covenant with me and sealed it with sacrifice."

**<sup>6</sup>The heavens declare the rightness of God's cause, for it is God who is judge.**

### **SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 4:3–6**

*The spotlight of Christian ministry is not on the people who carry out ministry but on the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as God made light shine out of darkness at creation, God makes the light of Jesus Christ shine in our lives through Christian ministry.*

<sup>3</sup>And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup>For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup>For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

### **GOSPEL: Mark 9:2–9**

*Mark's gospel presents the transfiguration as a preview of what would become apparent to Jesus' followers after he rose from the dead. Confused disciples are given a vision of God's glory manifest in the beloved Son.*

<sup>2</sup>Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup>and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup>And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup>He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup>Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved listen to him!" <sup>8</sup>Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. <sup>9</sup>As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.