

Second Sunday in Lent

February 27, 2021

Mark: 9: 2-10

Submitted by Dr. Rosemary Murphy

For our reflection this week, it might be helpful to recall a concert or event which took us to a special venue and began with a sonorous announcer voice, saying, “Ladies and gentlemen join now in welcoming 50-time Grammy winner and renowned artist So and So.” From clouds of smoke and glorious pyrotechnic special effects, the artist descends, arises or enters the stage, costumed in dazzling attire. The event increases our heart rate, fills us with awe, and heightens our anticipation of what is to come. If we can imagine that kind of setting, our appreciation for the Gospel for this Second Sunday in Lent will be greatly enriched.

The Markan reading for today is traditionally called the Transfiguration. Some scripture scholars refer to it as a “theophany.” Theophanies occur in the Old Testament when the Almighty is present and may speak to individuals and eyewitnesses in apocalyptic events that deliver prophetic or revelatory messages. For example, Moses’ experience of God on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:15-17) or the prophet Elijah’s whirlwind ascension into heaven (2 Kings 2:11). God becoming present and speaking conveys majesty and power.

For Peter, James and John—standing there on a high mountain where Divine communication takes place—the transfiguration provided a glimpse of the Risen Jesus. Peter wants to build booths to hold on to the pleasure of the moment. Specifically, what does Mark reveal in this mysterious event that Jesus’ inner-circle disciples do not fully understand?

- The heavenly voice affirms that Jesus truly is the Son of God.
- The dazzling brilliance of the scene with Moses and Elijah suggests that Jesus is the Messiah, the fulfillment of God’s promise to Israel.
- In Jesus, the Messiah, the Kingdom of God is both here now and coming at a future point.
- For God’s Kingdom to become our future reality, Jesus will suffer, die, and rise again

Suddenly, however, the event is over. Jesus and his perplexed disciples come down from the mountain and Jesus tells them to keep the happening to themselves until he rises from dead. The inclusion of this gospel in the Lenten readings can catch our attention and lead us to deeper prayer. Like the disciples we may not truly understand, but through our reflection, this Lent can be an event when we experience anew the mystery of Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection that we might know the glory and brilliance of God’s perfect love in God’s eternal Kingdom.