

Last Epiphany, Year B 2021
The Church of the Redeemer, Greenville, SC
February 14, 2021

2 Kings 2:1-12 Psalm 50:1-6 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 Mark 9:2-9

If you are in need of some imagery for God, today is your day!

The psalmist writes:

Our God comes and will not keep silence ...

before him is a devouring fire, and a mighty tempest all around him.

With a chariot of fire and horses of fire accompanying him, Elijah swirls in a whirlwind up to heaven.

Peter, James, John, with Jesus on a mountain top, experience Jesus as they've never seen him before: with robes that are "dazzling white" – indescribable light, along with the booming voice of God:

This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!

We remember that at Jesus' baptism, God spoke to Jesus: "**you** are my beloved Son;" today the message is for **us**. "This is my Son, the Beloved."

What does God look like to you? What has God looked like to you during this season of Epiphany, when Jesus is revealed as the light of the world? What sort of light is Jesus in your mind?

I am remembering the white candle of Christmas, the Christ candle, with its single flame radiating light into the darkness. From the gospel of John, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." Darkness will not overcome the light...

Mark's gospel has taken us from Jesus' baptism to this mountaintop, with God as a booming voice; the gospel continues:

Then a cloud overshadowed them ... and it was time to leave that incredible experience, to come off of the mountain and walk with Jesus to Jerusalem. None of them on that mountaintop would ever be the same ...

The disciples saw Moses and Elijah, heard God's voice speaking to them; how could they ever be the same? Jesus' outside was "transfigured," seen in a new form ... divine in a human body. I suspect that the apostles had been transformed; that is, changed on the inside.

About a year ago a cloud overshadowed the world, one that has affected millions of people around the world. Over two million people have died. The United States will surpass ½ a million deaths about Wednesday of this week. How has this cloud changed you? What are we to do with all of that today, and in our upcoming season of Lent?

As a congregation we are embarking once again on a journey of in-person worship, even though it still might not be quite what we want it to because we have all been changed by the Coronavirus, by the political climate, by this particular passage of time. If we are on a mountain

top today, it sure does not seem dazzling white. But Jesus is present, maybe you and Jesus alone. Ultimately, it is up to us what we will take down from the mountaintop of the culmination of the last year ... and most importantly, how Jesus the light of Christ is still with us.

That single flame that I envision changes everything. In that light lies hope and continuity, the knowledge that God is present in every day's journey, whether it is to a inspiring mountain top or to the desert that will take us to Jerusalem with Jesus.

So today, today is a gift! See the light of God transforming Jesus' garments at a time when he has not suffered, died, or risen. Therein lies hope for you and I. We can immerse ourselves in an unassuming Lent, living Lent through the lens of knowing "the rest of the story." We are never unsupported, never not held by Jesus – Jesus, our best experience and depiction of God in this world. We know God most by the person of Jesus, the person of Jesus the Christ, who was transfigured – changed on the outside – in front of our eyes that we might see God within him.

As we weary of masks and distancing and ... everything else, hold onto the light, the light of Christ, the embodiment of God in Jesus the Christ, who is here through the Holy Spirit now.

It is my hope that we do not return to everything that was before Covid's cloud covered our lives. It is not the cloud, the darkness that defined the transfiguration experience; the cloud simply marked time. It is God, through Jesus, who transforms us in everything that we experience. Do not fear today. Do not dread the desert and whatever journey we face ahead. The darkness will not overcome the light.

In living Lent, I will seek to discern better what is needed, what is essential, and what is excess. I hope to model a simple, sincere Lent in which, with you, I examine my relationship with God in God's fullness: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are offering to everyone "Living Lent" bags for some Lenten practices at home. Our Lenten journey and study include Lenten Micropractices, in which we sample living and praying in some specific ways. I invite you to join in all of that richness, not to fill our lives, but to focus our lives on Jesus. As we hear on the mountain: "This is my Son; listen to him."

Brothers and Sisters, live Lent. Shed the unnecessary. Find some quiet places to pray, to find God, to discover what it is that God has to say to you in this moment, in this year's journey.

How will you have been changed when Christ is risen? Prepare. This is our Christian journey, our Lenten gift of self-examination and renewal.

May God, in *God's* image, be with us all.