

3 Feb., 2008
1st Sunday of Lent
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In our first lesson we hear how Moses went up the mountain and there in a cloud, he talked to God and got his instructions - the tablets of stone with the ten commandments. Moses was leading the Israelites out of bondage. He was looking for guidance from God. Moses also got instructions on how to build a tabernacle. He stayed on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights getting all of the instructions.

After 6 days of Jesus being with his disciples, he took Peter, James and John, and headed up the side of Mount Herman. All of a sudden, Jesus' features were changed. His face shone, and his clothes turned a dazzling white. Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking to Jesus.

Jesus knew what was going to happen and he, I'm sure, was asking if it had to be that way. He knew he was going to suffer and this is where the human side of him came into play. Isn't there an easier way, a less suffering way? Jesus had to be sure that what he knew was going to happen if he went into Jerusalem, and the consequences. Was he sure that that was what God had wanted for him? Evidently, from the bible's version of his death, there was no other way, and this is what the two angels told him.

Jesus was not going to take any step without clearing it with God. "What does God want me to do?" We are not like Jesus; we always ask, "What do I wish to do?" Jesus always had the will of God in mind, and not his will.

Horatius Bonar's hymn says it well:

Thy way, not mine, O Lord, Lead me by thine own hand;	However dark it be! Choose out the path for me
I dare not choose my lot, Choose thou for me, my God,	I would not if I might: So shall I walk aright.
Not mine, not mine the choice Be thou my Guide, my Strength,	In things of great or small; My Wisdom and my All.

There is something special about the two men who met with Jesus on the mountain. Both Moses and Elijah had their most intimate moment with God on a mountain. Moses, when he received the stone tablets of the commandments and Elijah, on Mt. Horeb, found God in a still small voice. A voice that told him to anoint Hazael and Jehu as kings and Elisha as prophet to succeed himself, Elijah.

There was also something special about the death of both Moses and Elijah. Moses died a lonely death on Mt. Nebo and was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, but no

one knows his burial place. Elijah departed from Elisha in a chariot and horses of fire. Both men who appeared with Jesus on the mountain seemed to be too great to die.

Matthew doesn't say what they talked about, but in Luke we hear how they talked about how Jesus would depart and that he was on the right track, going to Jerusalem, where he would be beset with perils, a journey involving a cross, but a journey of glory.

In Jewish thought, these two men, Moses and Elijah, were the twin peaks of the Jewish history and religion. It is as if the two greatest of Israel were coming to tell him to go on in his journey. They were there as the greatest of the lawgivers and the greatest of the prophets, they recognized Jesus as the one of whom they had dreamed, and as the one of whom the prophets foretold. Their appearance was a signal that Jesus was on the right path and urged him to continue in his adventurous exodus to Jerusalem and on to Calvary.

This mountain experience was a spiritual peak for Jesus. First, he had two of the greatest of Israel to cheer him on. The greatest lawgiver and the greatest prophet, and then to top it off there was the voice in the cloud that gave him the approval of God. "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, listen to him."

This mountain high transfiguration was an experience for the disciples also. They were bewildered and confused by the continuing insistence of Jesus that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer and die. To die on the cross would be utter shame.

The glory on this mountain must have been an exciting experience because the Jews had always known the promise of God to the victorious; their face is to shine like the sun. Here surely was something to lift up the hearts of the disciples. They would see the glory through the shame, the triumph through the shame, the crown beyond the cross. They probably still did not understand the whole situation, but somehow could see the glimmering glory beyond the humiliation of the cross. They had a lot to understand.

Peter wanted to prolong this moment. Don't we all like to bask in glory and wish it would last longer? But God did not want it to last a long time, he came in the cloud and spoke to them and put an end to the meeting. How abruptly you can see that God is in charge. Jesus told them not to tell anyone about this; it was going to take some time for the people to accept him as Messiah and not as *conquering* Messiah.

There were a lot of similarities between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. They all were great leaders. They all had direct communication with God. None of them died a normal death.

Jesus is the only one that all of the prophets told the people that he was coming. Jesus proclaimed himself to be the son of God. Was proclaimed by God as being his son, when he was baptized and in the transfiguration. These were all true prophets listed in

the bible and not false prophets who foretold his coming. There have been many false prophets and none can stand up to the prophets in the bible.

There is a fad going around where we are being told that Jesus wasn't a virgin birth, that Jesus wasn't resurrected, that they either forgot where they put him or someone stole the body during the night, but he wasn't raised from the dead. A statement made to me was that he was only a prophet. I think these are false Christians because what makes us Christians is belief in the virgin birth, and in the resurrection of Christ and in the transfiguration.

Jesus said, "More blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." We read the newspaper every day and believe what *it* says, most of the time anyway.

The transfiguration is what convinced the disciples, and God speaking to them out of the cloud, "This is my son, my beloved, in whom I am well pleased, listen to him." In the Epistle, Peter says, "We had been eye witnesses to his majesty." The bible takes us through Jesus' whole life, his suffering, and his death. That is why we believe as Christians, and not false Christians. I believe the bible.

The last part of the Epistle today, Peter said, "We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart." We must receive Jesus in our heart and proclaim him in our speech.

Again John 20:29 –Then Jesus told Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Lord, we thank you for the gift of your son. Help us to understand him and to do your will. Help us in forgiveness of others and in understanding of your lamp, your light in the world, Jesus.

Amen.