

The challenge of living a transfigured life
SPRINGLINE PARISH – SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE LENT YEAR B 2018

READINGS: 2 Kings 2. 1-12, 2 Corinthians 4. 3-6, Mark 9.2-9

The Word of God

The psalmist prayed: “Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.” Let us open our hearts to listen to and respond to God’s holy and life-giving Word as read and spoken to us this morning.

THE SERMON: “The challenge of living a transfigured life

Prayer

O God, our loving Father, help us to break the Bread of your Word and feed on your life-giving message to us today. Amen.

Introduction

I hope you all had a good week. I wonder if any of you had a God-experience of some sorts and I wonder if anyone would like to testify your experience with God in the past week. As I said last Sunday our Church can be built up with testimonies and stories of faith. So, if anyone would like to share your story of faith with us, do let me know.

Today, both in the OT reading as well as the NT reading, we have two testimonies of a supernatural experience. In the first reading we heard of how prophet Elijah was taken up to heaven in glory and splendour in the sight of prophet Elisha.

In the gospel we have heard of the extraordinary event of the transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor. The transfiguration story is one of my very favourite biblical events.

The transfiguration establishes Jesus’ glorious identity as the beloved Son of God.

The key verse for me is verse 2 of Mark chapter 9. Jesus takes with him Peter, James and John up a “**a high mountain**”. Mountains are traditionally identified as Tabor and Hermon and are the usual settings for supernatural revelations and theophanies.

It is significant that Jesus took Peter, James and John up the solitude of the mountain and “**was transfigured before them.**” The form of Jesus was changed. The disciples are granted a glimpse of him in his glorious state, which is to be his eternal state after the death and resurrection.

This vision is like a preview of Jesus’ eternal glory, a preview of the final coming of God’s Kingdom. There is a divine imprint, something spiritual and utterly supernatural in what took place on that mountain that day, a true God-experience for Peter, James and John.

Note that Jesus was transfigured “**when they were all alone**”. *Luke in 9.28 says that Jesus went up the mountain to pray.* We also know that Jesus often went apart to a lonely place or early in the morning to pray. He sought “solitude” to discover to commune with his Father and to his identity and his mission in life.

Solitude is the creation of an open, empty space in our lives. We purposely abstain from interaction with other people so as to be freed from competing loyalties and to be found by God.

Only, for some reason, this time Jesus took with him Peter, James and John who were spectators and witness of the transfiguration. Probably Jesus wanted them to not to lose their faith in him when the same Peter, James and John would be with him in the Garden of Gethsamene in that intense time of passion and prayer, that this same Jesus bathed in glory and splendour would also be covered with blood and spittle in the scandal and tragedy of the cross. The transfiguration and crucifixion are two sides of the same coin of the mystery of our salvation.

We are so busy in our lives, always on the move. We never time to sit still, to be silent or to pray. We always have so many pretexts for not seeking or making space for silence and solitude in our life. If we don't, how do we encounter God, how do we listen to God, how do we discover our true identity as children of God, how are we to be transfigured in our lives?

Mother Teresa of Calcutta who spent so much of her day in active service of the poorest of the poor in the streets of Calcutta felt that she served Jesus in the poorest of the poor, the old, inform, the disfigured, the sick, BUT she drew her strength from the time of prayer and solitude that she spent every day and that she wanted all her sisters to adhere to every day. In fact, in the rules of the Missionaries of Charity as they are called, the sisters and brothers are required to set apart an hour or more of silent and personal adoration of Jesus in the Blessed sacrament before they ventured out to serve the poorest of the poor in the streets and in their homes. Mother Teresa knew that only time spent with God can give us that type of inner strength and courage to serve the needy and the poor like Jesus did.

If there is one message that we can take with us from the word of God today is that we too can be transfigured in our lives, that we too can discover our identity and glory in Jesus, that we too can live a transfigured life – IF – we are ready to create an open and empty space of solitude in our lives. We all are so busy but we must make it a priority to spend time with God in solitude and silence if we want to live a transfigured life in the midst of our earthly and mundane lives.

The transfiguration story inspires us to set apart a “quiet time with God” every day. The transfiguration story reminds us to make free space in our daily life set apart for solitude and silence with God.

It is quite like when we love someone. We delight to make space and time to be with the loved one. The same can be applied to us. If you truly love God, you need to make space and time to be with God. Prayer is after all pure relationship and intimacy with God.

It is opening your heart and giving your life into God's hands. It is allowing God to enter into your heart. It is listening to his will and obeying him. That is when you are transfigured! Even our physical appearance will take on a heavenly glow!

This happened also to Moses, after a long time of prayer and communion with God, Exodus 34. 29 tells us, *“when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with two tables of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God”*.

Also we know that it was probably when Mary was in prayer that is communion with God, that the angel Gabriel came to her and told her, *“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus”* (Lk 1. 28, 30-31)

Also it was, as the Acts of the Apostles tells us in chapter 2, that when “they were all together in one place”, probably praying, that “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2. 1, 4).

The transfiguration story reminds us that our roots are not here, that we belong elsewhere, the nostalgia for something beyond, like Saint Augustine used to pray: *“Our hearts are made for thee O Lord, and they shall never rest until they rest in thee!”*

We are reminded that when we truly make free space for God in our humdrum daily lives, when we take time for solitude and silence we will discover our true identity as sons and daughters of God. In other words, we need to take time to pray in the hustle and bustle of our daily lives. Going apart up a mountain may not be possible although the Downs are truly picturesque places for prayer, but you need to be alone with Jesus to be transfigured.

This is my wish for you today: *if you wish to transform your life and live a transfigured life and touch glory and be bathed in the light of God’s love, you have to learn to spend time with God. You have to be alone with Jesus.*

Let us pray

Life is a journey, a pilgrimage. We are a people on the move, bound for our homeland in heaven. We have not here a lasting city, pilgrims and exiles that we are. Help us to take off every day to be with you, to set apart times to be alone with you, to create free space and time to spend in solitude of intimacy with you and in this way to be truly transfigured by you and thus to reach out to others in the service of your Kingdom. Amen.

[ST Mattapally]