



3/17/19 Luke 9:28-36 & Gn. 15: 5-12, 17-18

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#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

Once in a while we stand on the threshold of a choice that will forever affect our future. We know that if we choose to go ahead with the option presented, there will be no going back. Jesus is the only one in this gospel who appreciates this reality. The disciples, who haven't a clue, want to stop time and stay where they are. But Jesus chooses to go forward, and if the disciples want to be part of his future they also must go along into the unknown. As the group descends the mountain, they are grateful they have been told to be quiet about what happened. It will take Pentecost before they are ready to speak. Let us descend with them as we go deeper into this Lent.

#### Lk. 9:28-36

28 About **eight days** after Jesus said this, he took **Peter, John** and **James** with him and went up onto a **mountain to pray**. 29 As he was **praying**, the appearance of his **face changed**, and his clothes became as **bright as a flash of**

**lightning**. 30 Two men, **Moses** and **Elijah**, 31 appeared in **glorious splendor**, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his **departure**, which he was about to bring to **fulfillment** at Jerusalem. 32 **Peter** and his companions were **very sleepy**, but when they became **fully awake**, they saw his **glory** and the **two men** standing with him. 33 As the men were leaving Jesus, **Peter** said to him, "Master, **it is good for us to be here**. Let us put up **three shelters**--one for you, one for **Moses** and one for **Elijah**." (**He did not know what he was saying**.) 34 While he was speaking, a **cloud** appeared and **enveloped them**, and they were **afraid** as they entered the **cloud**. 35 A **voice** came from the **cloud**, saying, "**This is my Son**, whom I have chosen; **listen to him**." 36 When the **voice** had spoken, they found that Jesus was **alone**. The disciples **kept this to themselves**, and **told no one** at that time what they had **seen**.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Jesus hears: "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." What have you "heard" from Jesus lately that has helped you understand the Father better?

**PRAYER:** Master Jesus, it is indeed good for me to be here. Here with you as you go before me into God's future hopes for me. Like the disciples in this gospel reading, I have only a glimpse of what that might mean, so I am reluctant to talk about it now. But like them, I trust that if I stay close to you I will arrive at where I am supposed to be; with you. Amen.

#### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**EIGHT DAYS:** Luke has eight days, the length of time of the feast of Tabernacles, the time the people recounted God's saving deeds, as they wandered in the desert now freed from slavery. It can also be an allusion to the Resurrection.

*Does knowing the significance of the eight days enlarge my understanding of this episode? How?*

**PETER / JAMES/ JOHN:** Whenever we encounter these three with Jesus it is usually at a pivotal moment in salvation history. We will meet this trio again on the Mount of Olives.

*Which of these men do I most easily identify with, and why?*

**MOUNTAIN TO PRAY:** There is something about a mountain that lends itself to closeness to God. Both Moses and Elijah went to the mountain to speak with God.

*Where do I go to pray that helps me to feel the closeness of God?*

**BRIGHT AS A FLASH OF LIGHTENING:** Jesus, like Moses, is radiant because of his exposure to God presence. (See also Ex. 34:29) It comes after a prediction of Jesus' death.

*How do I imagine this scene? Does this evoke some of the stories of near death experiences that I have heard?*

**MOSES / ELIJAH/ TWO MEN:** The people rejected these prophets of God. They represented the law and the prophets in Israel. Both were thought to have been assumed into heaven.

*What makes these two representatives significant for this encounter? What is this saying about Jesus?*

**GLORIOUS SPLENDOR:** Today, Jesus gets a preview of what is to be. Later on in Luke 24:26, Jesus will explain to the disciples on the way to Emmaus what they only dimly saw on the mountain that day.

*What makes this reading a good one for the second week of Lent?*

**DEPARTURE:** A departure is a leaving, a divergence, or deviation from a standard or a rule. Only Luke mentions this.

*What does this add to the story of the Transfiguration?*

**FULFILLMENT:** To be fulfilled is to be fully realized or completed.

*What promise is implied with this word?*

**VERY SLEEPY / FULLY AWAKE:** Two times, now and on the Mount of Olives (22:45), we find the three disciples sleeping and then being startled into awareness.

*Does this amazing account awaken me from some form of sleep? In what way?*

**IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE:** Peter, ever the one to speak before he thinks exclaims that it is good to be there.

*Why was it good for the disciples to be there? Would I have liked to be there with them?*

**HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT HE WAS SAYING:** Luke wants us to know that Peter really did not understand what he had just experienced. He therefore responded in a way that betrayed his ignorance.

*Have I ever had this kind of experience? What did it take for me to understand what was really going on?*

**THREE SHELTERS:** When the people wandered in the desert for 40 years they lived in shelters (booths). It was the time of transition on the way to the Promised Land.

*Peter grasps part of the revelation when he associates this experience with the transition time. What 'Promised Land' is Luke alluding to?*

**VOICE:** The Israelites related to God as a person who spoke to them with a voice that could be heard.

*Have I ever heard God's voice? Do I experience God as person?*

**CLOUD:** We often speak of clouds as something that obscures, confuses or causes something to become indistinct. In scripture a cloud often was seen as a protective shield against the too-much-ness of God.

*Which of these understandings helps me best with this text? Why?*

**ENVELOPED THEM:** In Ex. 40:34 a cloud covered the Tent of Meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the dwelling. It was the place where the people went to meet with God in the desert.

*What does it do to me to be in a situation where I can't see? Have I ever been enveloped in the fog? How do I remember the feeling? Does this memory help me to understand this text? How?*

**AFRAID:** Afraid implies an inner apprehensive disquiet.

*Why do I think the disciples were afraid? What about this experience might cause an inner apprehensive disquiet?*

**THIS IS MY SON:** Jesus now sets his face towards Jerusalem. Once again, as at his baptism, Jesus is affirmed as Son.

*Do I think Jesus needed to be reaffirmed once again that he is God's son? Have I ever needed to be reaffirmed when pressing ahead with what I think is God's will for me?*

**LISTEN TO HIM:** Often the problem is deciding who really speaks for God, and who is speaking for themselves. Now God directs the disciples to Jesus as the one who speaks on God's behalf.

*How do I discern who is speaking on God's behalf today?*

**ALONE:** Now Jesus is alone and the disciples begin to see that he is unique, unequalled and unexcelled.

*What does the absence of Moses and Elijah do for the disciples? For Jesus?*

**KEPT THIS TO THEMSELVES / TOLD NO ONE:** It is beginning to dawn on the disciples that they only know a tiny bit of what happened to them that day, so they are now deep in silence.

*Have I ever experienced something that was so overwhelming that I was struck mute? Did I need time alone to work through the insight before being were ready to share it with someone?*

**SEEN:** To have seen can mean to perceive (things) mentally, discern, or understand.

*How well do I think the disciples understood the experience they had shared with Jesus that day? If I would have been there, do I think I would have been quiet too?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Lk. 9:28-36 // Mt. 17:1-9; Mk. 2-10; Lk. 9:32 // Jn. 1:14; Lk. 9:35 // 2 Pt. 1:17;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Gn. 15:5-12, 17-18; [Ps. 27:1, 7-9, 13-14](#); Phil. 3: 17-4:1; Lk. 9:28-36;  
Revised Common Lectionary: Gn. 15:1-12, 17-18; [Ps. 27](#); Phil. 3:17-4:1; Lk. 13:31-35;

### SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

Ministry is acting in the Name of Jesus. When all our actions are in the Name, they will bear fruit for eternal life. To act in the Name of Jesus, however, doesn't mean to act as a representative of Jesus or his spokesperson. It means to act in an intimate communion with him. The Name is like a house, a tent, a dwelling. To act in the Name of Jesus, therefore, means to act from the place where we are united with Jesus in love. To the question "Where are you?" we should be able to answer, "I am in the Name." Then, whatever we do cannot be other than ministry because it will always be Jesus himself who acts in and through us. The final question for all who minister is "Are you in the Name of Jesus?" When we can say yes to that, all of our lives will be ministry. Henri Nouwen

:"Lord, take me where you want me to go; Let me meet who you want me to meet; tell me what you want me to say, and Keep me out of Your way." Father Mychal Judge

I can say from experience that 95% of knowing the will of God consists in being prepared to do it before you know what it is.  
- Donald Grey Barnhouse

If the Transfiguration looks back to the beginning in order to recommit to the program, it also looks ahead to glimpse the glory to come. Pg. 51. Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2010. Pg. 51.

Lk. 9.28–36: The Transfiguration (Mt 17.1–9; Mk 9.2–10). 28: About eight days, Jewish thought associates eight days with circumcision (Gen 17.12; 21.4; Lev 12.3), perhaps here subtly anticipating Jesus' resurrection on the "first day" after the old week. Peter and John and James, 8.51n. To pray, 3.21n. 29: Face, see Ex 34.29–34. Dazzling, suggests mystical experience (Ex 34.29–35; also Dan 12.3). 30: Moses and Elijah, unlikely representing "Torah" and "Nevi'im" (Prophets); perhaps representing the heavenly elect, righteous caught up to heaven, fidelity, or prophets rejected by (some of) the people. 31: Glory, 2.9n. Departure (Gk "exodus," "road out"), referring to Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. 32: Sleep, anticipating 22.45. 33: Dwellings, "tents" or "tabernacles." Not knowing, Peter wants Moses and Elijah to remain. 34: Cloud, indicating the divine presence (e.g., Ex 13.21–22). 35: Voice, see 3.22n. Chosen, cf. Isa 42.1; Jewish tradition affirms the people Israel as God's chosen (Gen 18.19; Deut 7.6; Isa 43.20; Ps 33.12; 89.19; 105.6; 1 Chr 16.13, and elsewhere). For God's choosing particular people, see e.g., Neh 9.7 (Abraham). Pg. 120. Levine, Amy-Jill & Brettler, Marc Zvi. The Jewish Annotated New Testament. NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 2011

We have the example of the response of Jesus "to both ecstatic joy and terrifying fear. Read Lk. 9:28-36. He tells of the transfiguration of Jesus. Notice how Jesus stays with the experience. He listens to the voice and then moves from the experience to enter into its implications. He is fully with the reality on the mountain, and fully with the reality of having to come down from the mountain. The disciples almost retreat into sleep. It seems that while they saw his glory, they missed the message of "his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem." Having received only part of the message, they responded in a different way from the response of Jesus. He moved on to respond to the whole of the reality. They responded as though the kingdom had come. The glory was there, it was good to be there, so let us do what people always do in holy places: put up some shrines. It seems that the reason they were to keep quiet about the event until after the resurrection was that Jesus did not want half-truths to be preached about him. The shrine that Jesus would offer to the Father was not to be one built by human hands. Pgs. 52-3.

Heaps, John. A Love That Dares to Question: A Bishop Challenges His Church. Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans Pub. Col. 1998.

Discipline is the other side of discipleship. Discipleship without discipline is like waiting to run in the marathon without ever practicing. Discipline without discipleship is like always practicing for the marathon but never participating. It is important, however, to realize that discipline in the spiritual life is not the same as discipline in sports. Discipline in sports is the concentrated effort to master the body so that it can obey the mind better. Discipline in the spiritual life is the concentrated effort to create the space and time where God can become our master and where we can respond freely to God's guidance. Henri Nouwen

At some moments we experience complete unity within us and around us. This may happen when we stand on a mountaintop and are captivated by the view. It may happen when we witness the birth of a child or the death of a friend. It may happen when we have an intimate conversation or a family meal. It may happen in church during a service or in a quiet room during prayer. But whenever and however it happens we say to ourselves, "This is it . . . everything fits . . . all I ever hoped for is here." This is the experience that Peter, James, and John had on the top of Mount Tabor when they saw the aspects of Jesus' face change and his clothing become sparkling white. They wanted that moment to last forever (see Luke 9:28-36). This is the experience of the fullness of time. These moments are given to us so that we can remember them when God seems far away and everything appears empty and useless. These experiences are true moments of grace. Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> reflection. Nouwen, Henri. Bread For the Journey. NY. HarperSanFrancisco. 1977.

Is it mere fancy that those westerners who have had an encounter of the 'other-worldly' kind as part of their near-death experience have felt that the mysterious 'Being of light' was either Jesus, or God, or both somehow rolled into one? Is it mere coincidence that all the synoptic Gospels report an extraordinary light-associated occurrence during Jesus' normal earthly existence when he appeared transfigured before them – 'his face shone like

the sun and his clothes...white as light?' Can it be similar mere chance that the fourth Gospel writer, apparently one of the witnesses of this event, writing nearly two thousand years before Raymond Moody, specifically speaks of Jesus as 'the true light that enlightens all men', emphatically stating; 'We saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father'? Wilson, Ian. The After Death Experience. William Morrow & Sons, NY.1987. Pg. 206.

What then is transfiguration? If time is my horizon, as Heidegger says, and death is my "own most possibility," transfiguration is the illumining of the human figure against this ground when I realize I am not simply my time ("am I my time?"), or, reversing figure and ground, when I realize time is full of eternity and death is full of life. Heart is speaking to heart here as in the transfiguration of Christ, "This is my beloved son" or "You are my beloved son," in that I have a sense of being known and loved.

Dunne, John. Love's Mind. Univ. of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN.1993. pg. 70.

The transfiguration is the experience of joy in finding the answer to the troubling question. Suffering Servant and Messiah-suffering and glory-are not mutually exclusive. They are not contradictory. They are not only compatible, but complementary and belong together not by some strange contrivance but in the wisdom of God's ways. It is simply the only and best way to come to glory. Sin hasn't changed the plan of creation, but given the dimension of sin, the glory achieved in the plan is even greater. There is no way to come to resurrection except through the experience of death. Faith unto death and into death is entrance to our resurrection. Again, the resurrection is not merely historical fact but the reality of the present achievement of faith. There is the anguish and even the uncertainty of the search and the transfiguration joy of the vision and the certainty of the answer. Jesus approaches his death, the Suffering Servant transfigured in faith, and rises out of death transformed in glory. In our own faith experience, promise of resurrection is real and it is at hand. It is proffered as a gift, yet the resurrection is the achievement of the faith of each believer as it is the achievement of the faith of Jesus. In the church-sacrament process, we get in on the Christ experience of search and discovery and final achievement as our very own personal experience. The Suffering Servant is not unnamed. The Suffering Servant becomes the Messiah. "How can this be?" It is by the power of the Most High. Pg. 124.

Parr, Raymond. Process Person Presence. Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1990.

This is his (Jesus') Rubicon. This is his "gateway" to the passion, death and resurrection. From here there is no turning back. It required someone else's intuition to enable him to pass across the threshold from ministry to mission, from preacher-teacher-healer to savior, from Son of Man to Son of God. It is here he takes the will for the deed. Up until this point he has been surrounded by his disciples. From here he strides out ahead of them. Bayton, Bishop John. Marking the Points of Transition. Parabola, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2000. Pages 90ff.

The foundational narratives from the scriptures shed light not only on the human condition but on the transcendent realities of God. ...Lk. 9: 28-36 is a text that directly reflects a liminal reality in its many dimensions.

Carson, Timothy L. Liminal Reality and Transformational Power. NY. Univ. Press of Amer. 1997. Pg. 115.

An interesting article in the 4/03 issue of Bible Review compares Jesus and Enoch. In it we find this quote of the book of Enoch (non-biblical) and also a reference to Dan. 7: 13-14. You can see why the disciples were predisposed to view Jesus with these two books in mind. "And the Lord said to [the archangel] Michael, "Go and extract Enoch from his earthly clothing. And anoint him with my delightful oil, and put him into the clothes of my glory." And so Michael did, just as the Lord had said to him. He anointed me and he clothed me. And the appearance of that oil is greater than the greatest light, and its ointment is like sweet dew, and its fragrance myrrh; and it is like the rays of the glittering sun. And I looked at myself, and I had become like one of his glorious ones, and there was no observable difference". (2 Enoch 22:6-10, J recension [OIP 1:138])

Another article in the 6/98 issue of Bible Review examines The Jewish Roots of the Transfiguration. In it we find references to Ps. 43:2-3; Mal. 3:23; Is. 42:1 and Ps. 95: 7. These multiple texts give us a background for understanding the disciples partial insight into what was really happening in this experience.

For what is prayer but the summary posture of those who foreswear the idolatry of self-reliance and affirm rather the perfection, primacy, and power of God? Alan Lewis

I asked the almond tree to tell me about God and it began to bloom. Ancient Chinese saying

**The Journey:** Where are you going i asked / to places i have never been / was the answer / what do you plan to do i asked / my purpose will be evident at journey's end / who has planned your itinerary i asked / its plan will be revealed at times most unlikely / why would you consent to such a vague plan i said / i accepted the challenge / when I accepted life was the answer Mary Elanor Rice Page 135

Janice Grana Ed. Images St. Mary's College Press, Winona MN 1976

"We need to set out on the journey and we need to let ourselves be coaxed into the unknown. Sometimes unwillingly and sometimes in the hands of our friends, sometimes by the fact that there is no other direction to go." Corrine Cavanaugh, Spinning Straw into Gold

## SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle C 2012.. Pgs. .55-59.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2007. Pgs.58-61.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2010. Pgs.49-52.