

**Sermon: 2020/02/23 (7th Sunday after Epiphany -  
TRANSFIGURATION) - Exodus 24:12-18; 2 Peter 1:16-21, & Matthew  
17:1-9\_BTR**

[Invite children to the front. A book of Greek mythology.]

One of the things that Poppy and I have in common; one of the things we share is a love for the Greek myths.

*The stories are so exciting!*

There are monsters with many heads.

And birds whose feathers are as hard as bronze.

A giant board with tusks like swords...

But such things are *clearly* make-believe.

(Such fantastical creatures don't exist.)

They are *myths*.

Well, we hear Peter use that word this morning.

He writes about 'myths' in his letter, saying what I've told you is different.

He was referring to the *Gospel of Mark*: [n.1].

And the stuff recorded in there about Jesus.

Some of the things he describes in its pages might *sound* similar to 'myths' but I was there, he says.

'We ourselves'.

And I'm real person, so trust me.

Let's pray:

Lord God, ????. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

[Dismiss children.]

The "transfiguration" of Christ on Mount Tabor in Galilee is a curious episode of uncertain meaning.

*I don't doubt that it happened.*

But what is its... significance?

For Peter, James and John who accompanied Jesus to the summit, it must have been *amazing* to see;

and *amazing* to be given that reassurance that the young rabbi they were following around wasn't leading them on some "wild goose chase;"

that He wasn't a charismatic but crazy-person, or a clever con-man.

He was the "real deal."

The bright light 'like the sun' and the booming voice from Heaven served to corroborate; to *validate* Peter's confession of a few days earlier: that this was *truly*

'the Son of the living God' - the Savior of the world.

But then, that one positive aside, the "transfiguration" proves to be, for them, such an anticlimax!

After all, the three Apostles saw the *very* "pearly gates" open before them, but the angelic legions that they probably hoped would come marching out, to overthrow the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem - that corrupt, "fat cat" priestly caste of collaborators, and wage war against the legion of Rome, throwing them back into the sea; to set free, once-and-for-all, the "Promised Land," breaking the cycle of imperial domination it had been forced to endure - those "angelic legions" were a "no show."

Instead, merely two *old*, grandfatherly men walked out, neither especially warrior-looking:

one was Moses and the other, Elijah.

And though they weren't, strictly speaking, soldiers, these were - *truly* - superstars of the Jewish imagination.

Moses, of course, who we were just hearing about in our Old Testament lesson, was the hero who led the Hebrews from captivity in Egypt, through the Red Sea and the wilderness, all the way to Canaan.

It was Moses who fetched down for them the Ten Commandments from God on Sinai.

It was Moses who inaugurated the cultic, sacrificial system around which Israelite society turned.

It was Moses who established the priesthood.

After Abraham, there was *no one* as important.

But all those things for which he was famous were *history*.

*Ancient* history.

And Moses, despite the conversation he was witnessed enjoying with our Lord, was dead.

And he had been for at least *a thousand* years.

He had been dead so long that even his bones were probably dust.

He was a distant, *distant* memory.

A relic; an antique.

Passe.

Elijah, on the other hand, represented the future.

Yes, he too hailed, (of course), from a bygone age:

specifically, the age of anarchy - *after* the conquest of Canaan but *before* the Davidic monarchy.

(And that was *many* centuries before the events of the New Testament.)

But what stood out *most* about him to Peter, James and John was *not* what he *had* done - his bloody, miraculous confrontations with the worshippers of the demon, Baal - but what he *would* do:

Jesus' contemporaries, you see, had begun to see Elijah, *first and foremost*, as one who would precede the Messiah on the Last Day: they thought that Elijah would return from wherever it was that he had been "swept" in that fiery chariot, and offer the people one, *final* chance at repentance before Judgement. Elijah, in other words, was about what-is-to-come. The not yet.

And Jesus stands between them;  
between the past and the future - *as a bridge*; like a tendon or ligament in the body, which joins muscle to bone.  
He was the link.

And that got me to thinking.

If Jesus is our model - our model of holiness that we aspire to in gratitude for the salvation He offers, so what does it mean for *us* to stand in the middle, embracing both the past and the future; *bridging* them?

Well, I see America being pulled apart; "pulled apart" in two, different directions: by those who wish it would always be "the good ol' days," and those clamouring for an impossible, perfect egalitarian utopia.

Both tendencies; both groups are myopic.

Those who *tend* to look back don't see the flaws, the injustices, the ignorance and superstition.

And those who tend to look to progress invest it with promises and potential it just can't deliver on.

And chasing after some hoped-for, supposedly more "advanced;" more "enlightened" next "step" in societal arrangements has often, if we look backwards, proven to be disastrous; a genocidal nightmare.

*At best*, "pie in the sky."

*Our* focus, however, as Christians isn't a calling to inhabit some fantasy of what-once-was-but-never-in-fact-existed, *nor* is it to pine, dream and agitate for what-will-probably-just-disappoint.

*Our* "focus" is supposed for faithfulness in this *present* moment:

Jesus says as much repeatedly.

"Do not worry"

"Consider the lilies of the field."

"No one knows what hour..." etc., etc.

It is this present moment with its challenges and opportunities that matters most - its challenges and opportunities for the Kingdom, for the Gospel, for evangelism and charity.

The rest is in God's hands.

Footnotes:

1. See: Green, Michael (1987/1987), *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Volume 18)*, Second Edition, Downers Grove, I. L.: IVP Academic (InterVarsity Press), 101.