

Feb 14

Last Sunday after the Epiphany

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm 99

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36[37-43a]

May the word of my mouth and the secret meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, and strength and our redeemer. Amen

Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”.

The commentary goes on to say.. --- not knowing what he said.”... not understanding, and responding inappropriately. Peter spent months traveling with Jesus, yet did not understand.

How many of us are like Peter?

How comfortable it is to have a special place in which we can ‘keep’ Jesus.. and our other Saints and teachers. We can come and worship in that place, and leave again, secure that we have done our duty... till the next time.

We are religious. We work hard for the church. We work hard to support people in need, like those from Grace Mission, as well as those in Haiti.

We meet together, eat together, study together, pray together. Do we actually understand? Is this a dwelling we have created for Jesus? Or is his dwelling within us; so where we go, Jesus goes; whatever we do, Jesus is involved; who ever we see, Jesus sees and they see Jesus reflected in our faces.

In Exodus, we read that Moses, having been with the Lord on Mount Sinai, came down with his face shining. People noticed and were afraid to come near.. but Moses called to them, and spoke with them. He shared the commandments that God had given him.

Somehow, the author of this incident is trying very hard to help us recognize the transformation that can happen when we truly are in direct contact with God.

In today's world, this transformation is not always as evident as Moses's shining face.

At an interdenominational conference of seminarians, we all seemed to be ordinary. Yet, I heard the comment, "We can tell all those who come from GTS. It must be because they are the only ones whose seminary pray the daily offices and celebrate the Eucharist daily.

At the annual meeting last week, we heard that St. John's was a church of hospitality. We welcome many groups into our facility. We offer inexpensive food. And at the Eucharist, all baptized Christians are welcome to receive communion.

We heard that we have a strong Pastoral Care commitment; that we care for members, and for their families, friends and relatives. We reach out with God's love to those we hear are in need.

We heard that we have a wonderful music program, one that draws people to participate.. that draws people to come and worship.. that offers to anyone the opportunity to move into a new season with our Evensongs, and Lessons and Carols.

We at St. John's offer much to the community of Tallahassee.

We can pat ourselves on our corporate back--  
-but is it enough?

Moses was transfigured. The Israelites needed Moses to veil his shining face, which he did unless speaking for God.

Jesus was transfigured. His veil was briefly lifted for the chosen disciples. And Peter responds by wanting to build him a dwelling..

But the gospel goes on to say..”The next day when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. Just then a man from the crowd shouted, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. ...

I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.”

“Jesus answered, ‘You faithless and perverse generation, How much longer must I be with you and bear with you. Bring your son here’”.

While he was coming the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.”

In a version of this story in the gospel of Mark, the ‘disciples asked him privately “Why could we not cast it out?” (Jesus) said to them, this kind can come out only through prayer.’

And in the healing of this boy, “All were astounded at the greatness of God.”

The disciples worked hard. They traveled with Jesus. They watched, asked questions, and learned. They learned to be hospitable, they learned to care. I expect they even learned to pray.. since we have been given the prayer Jesus taught them.

But they did not pray enough to meet the need of this child and his father.

We too, at St John's work hard. We read, we ask questions, we learn, we grow as we travel in our day, with the Lord Jesus.

But do we pray enough? Other seminarians prayed together once or twice a week. They prayed privately as well I expect. But there is something special about regular corporate prayer that brings everyone connect to it... into a deeper relationship with God, and his Son Jesus Christ.

This Wednesday is the first day of Lent, as together we acknowledge "we are dust and to dust we shall return."

But that should only begin the Lenten discipline. As a youngster, I was always asked "What are you giving up for Lent?"

Now days we have learned that as good as giving something up for Lent, if it is done prayerfully, and not just because we need to break a bad habit, spiritually we need to prepare for the Passion of Jesus and the Resurrection of Christ.

St. John's offers a Eucharist at 12.10 each day in the chapel. And during Lent, beginning on Thursday, parishioners will be praying the offices in the Chapel. Morning Prayer at 7.15. This service lasts 15-20 minutes. Maybe that can be a part of your Lenten discipline in preparation for Christ's passion and resurrection.

Paul tells us.. 'we have such a hope we act with great boldness..' And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one

degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.’

“Therefore since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart.”

Prayer is not just necessary, it is essential so that people can recognize we are not just good people, having a good time, doing good for ourselves and our community. We are challenged to act in this place these days, with great boldness.. with unveiled faces.. being transformed from one degree of glory to another.

Are we being transformed into the Lord’s image?

Do we pray enough individually? Do we pray enough corporately? Do not depend on others. Do not rationalize as to how busy you are.

Make it a Lenten discipline to join in corporate prayer as often as possible.