



Last Sunday after the Epiphany

February 11th, 2018

II Kings 2:9-12; Psalm 50:1-6; II Corinthians 4:5-6;

Mark 9:2-3; Mark 9:4-7; Mark 9:7-9

First Reading

⁹When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.' Elisha said, 'Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.' ¹⁰He responded, 'You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.' ¹¹As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. ¹²Elisha kept watching and crying out, 'Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!' But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

II Kings 2:9-12

Second Reading

⁵For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. ⁶For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

II Corinthians 4:5-6

PSALM 50:1-6

P. 768

- 1 The Lord, the God of gods, has spoken; * he has called the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.
- 2 Out of Zion, perfect in its beauty, * God reveals himself in glory.
- 3 Our God will come and will not keep silence; * before him there is a consuming flame, and round about him a raging storm.
- 4 He calls the heavens and the earth from above * to witness the judgement of his people.
- 5 "Gather before me my loyal followers, * those who have made a covenant with me and sealed it with sacrifice."
- 6 Let the heavens declare the rightness of his cause; * for God himself is judge.

Blessed are you, God of glory; you call us to give up all our vain attempts to reach you, and to come before you in thanksgiving for your great salvation, shown to us in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Third Reading

²Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.

Mark 9:2-3

Fourth Reading

⁴And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' ⁶He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!'

Mark 9:4-7

Fifth Reading

⁸Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. ⁹As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Mark 9:7-9

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!'

Privacy! What a concept! The irony is that as privacy is sought more and more, privacy becomes less and less available. It seems that wherever we go, we are being video-taped. And the closed circuit TV cameras are getting of higher and higher quality.

Not only are they getting better and better resolution and sound; with drone technology they can move to follow any person to keep an eye on her or him. More than this, they can be designed and built to look like what they are not! I saw a drone last week that was fashioned to look like a bird. It had bird-like wings with which to fly and it easily perched on a hydro wire. To the casual observer, it could simply go unnoticed.

Most of us have heard about new TV's, microwaves and other appliances having video observation features installed for remote surveillance in our homes. This area of product development is only in its infancy. We can only begin to imagine what will be coming in the near future or how it may be used.

There was a time when one would keep a secret from being heard or recorded by being careful to tell someone else only in the middle of an isolated place or wilderness area of some kind. But we can soon expect that, talking to someone in secret in such sites may not guarantee any privacy at all. Some people who know me have experienced my own little attempts at keeping something private. In my former organization driven life, confidential matters were not unusual. So if I had to discuss something regarding a personnel matter, a property sale, or a private financial situation, I would then go about the business of arranging a meeting where I knew adequate privacy was afforded.

But there were those times when I might see someone in public with whom I would like to have a quick private word. My way of talking to them in confidence usually went like this. "John", I would like to have a private word with you — would you mind stepping into my office? Of course, my real office would be no where near where we were. I would motion for "John" or whoever, to follow me to a remote location nearby where I thought no one else could hear us. That space at that time would then be for all intents and purposes "my Office".

Enter Jesus. God was in need of providing an opportunity for Peter and James and John to come to better understand who Christ was and what he represented. It was one thing to verbalize the importance of a movement; who is involved; and what should be anticipated in the future. It was quite another to demonstrate the situation in real life in the presence of the key personalities involved. But for Jesus' ministry to be successful, things had to happen in a certain way with established outcomes. Our Lord's key disciples had to know what was going on, the meaning of it all, and how events were expected to unfold. If they didn't grasp all of this and more, they just might lose their sense of commitment, passion and nerve at a wrong time.

This meant a few things had to be made absolutely clear to them. One was that Jesus was really the Son of God. Another was that God directly authenticated and endorsed the truth of this reality. Still another focused on demonstrating through Moses' presence that people do survive the grave — people do live after their earthly deaths. And yet, another was that as much as these men would like to let everyone know of this encounter, that nothing was to be said about it until after the resurrection — nobody else was to know!

At the time, Jesus who was seen as the Messiah and Son of God, was also facing death. Not many followers would be able to get their minds around this. Common logic would have implied that the Son of God would not be subject to being done away with in any manner.

God knew that Peter, James and John could not ignore the combination of the transfiguration; the living presence of Moses and Elijah; and very importantly, God's voice coming from a cloud above saying, *This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!* All of these would remain with them forever! And much of the public would better understand the events surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection when it came time to share the knowledge of the transfiguration event with them after Jesus' death and resurrection. Also, the spreading of the Gospel would be anticipated to be bolstered by a knowledge of what was experienced and said on that remote mountain spot.

And today? Does this story mean anything to us so many years after the death and resurrection of our Lord? I think it does. We are about to start on another Lenten journey — a journey that brings us a knowledge of our Lord, his death and his resurrection. It is a time for reflecting on what we have come to know in our faith. It is a time for pondering the effect that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus has had on our lives; how our faith has impacted who we are and what we do in this world? As part of this we dare to contemplate the Biblical references to how Jesus lived, his spiritual and human natures, and ask ourselves what kind of world would we have without his coming to be among us.

More than that, we would do well to contemplate the impact on the world being felt from those who are hostile, whether by statement or by their actions, to any sense of the presence of God. And also, it would be well to consider the actions of those who claim to love God, but rationalize acting in ways that are opposed to what God asks of God's people.

Today's service is in the Celtic Christian tradition. It would also be fitting to consider the emphasis of the Celtic Christians on such things as: gender equality, tolerance of other faiths, respect for creation, a strong sense of the spiritual, and the dominance of love as a part of their faith.

At the beginning of this sermon, much was said about privacy. Now we are close to the conclusion. In the place of privacy there is an opposite consideration. Let us make sure that we are not keeping our faith private to ourselves. Others need to hear. Others need to be freed from the oppressions of the worlds in which they feel they are entrapped. May they come to know that Christ came to make us and them free!