

Extreme Makeover

[2 Kings 2:1-12](#), [Mark 9:2-9](#)

If anyone has seen the show, “Extreme Makeover Home Edition”, you may be familiar with the theme of transformation or transfiguration as seen in today’s scripture lessons. The show usually begins with a family telling their story. Often it is a family that has touched the neighborhood in very special ways, yet they have a home that is totally inadequate for the family needs. I remember one episode where a family’s eldest son was born with several issues. He was paralyzed from the waist down, blind, and his arms could not completely straighten. Yet this son realized an incredible gift for music. As such he played in the high school marching band, with his father pushing his wheel chair in the correct formations. The family home was not conducive at all for a family of their size and this was most evident with the problems concerning the eldest son’s challenges

of trying to contribute to family life in a house that was not built for someone requiring the assistance of a wheel chair.

The show typically sends the family off for a week-long vacation while the team literally demolishes the home and builds a new one with the help of friends and neighbors. When the family returns, there is usually a large bus in front of the new home blocking the view of the family. Then everyone shouts together, 'Bus driver, move that bus!' for the dramatic revealing. In this particular show, the eldest son was given a scale model of the home so he too could experience the splendor of the moment. In every case, the revealing is the pinnacle of a complete transformation. From that moment on, nothing is the same.

Today is Transfiguration Sunday – a day of splendor and majesty. Our paraments are white today, to represent Jesus'

raiment. The Christ candle is out today to remind us of the holy son of God. The Hebrew Bible scripture read for us from 2 Kings describes Elijah the prophet being swept away from earth on a chariot of fire. Elijah was transformed from an earthy prophet to a heavenly being, while God passed the earthly work on to Elisha. The gospel lesson from Mark shows the familiar scene where Jesus goes up on a mountain (possibly Mount Tabor) and is literally transfigured – his clothes became dazzling white. I can imagine an aura surrounding him as he stood in the presence of God.

Prior to this experience, Peter, James, and John had witnessed Jesus perform many miracles. They experienced firsthand how two small fish and five small loaves of bread could feed a literal multitude. They had seen Jesus with their own eyes walking on water and calming a storm. They had seen

healings from all kinds of illnesses and conditions. But for some reason, they continued to be confused about who Jesus was.

They had listened to Jesus' teachings and knew and felt the authority he projected. Yet they still did not seem to truly understand or trust that Jesus was the son of God.

Perhaps we are afflicted with the same condition – doubt. Maybe we have seen God's work in our lives, but when some problem comes up soon after, we doubt it was God at all. We have all heard the illustrations of someone who says, 'God, if you get me out of this one, I'll never do it again.' How quickly we forget! It usually doesn't take long before we are chanting, 'Why me, God?' 'What did I do to deserve this?' If we take the gospel lesson in context perhaps there may be a little enlightenment. Just prior to the Transfiguration experience, Jesus had predicted his death and resurrection, at which point

Peter rebuked Jesus. Peter could only see the earthly side of Jesus – he and the rest of the disciples seemed to struggle with the heavenly side of Jesus – the whole concept of God made flesh. It seemed they just could not fully understand what they were experiencing as being a part of Jesus inner circle. Perhaps this is why Jesus took the big three – Peter, James, and John – up on the mountain with him.

What an awesome sight that must have been. Can you just imagine seeing Jesus clothed in the full splendor of God's glory, to hear God's voice clearing stating, 'this is my son. Listen to him.' All I can say is, whoa. This is probably the definition of a mountaintop experience. You've probably been to a celebration that you wished would never end. That special vacation, or party, or family event – everyone is having a good time, spirits are high – you just wish it could go on forever. Hence we

usually whip out our cameras and try to capture the moments so we always remember the splendor of the occasion.

Apparently Peter had these same thoughts. Jesus was not alone on the mountaintop. He was joined by both Elijah and Moses. Elijah appears to represent the words of the prophets who foretold the fulfillment of God's plan with the coming of the Messiah in Jesus. Moses appears to represent the reminder of God's covenant with God's people – that personal relationship that God calls us into. It is interesting that the disciples had never seen Elijah and Moses before, yet they recognized them. There were no doubts in that moment – Jesus was the fulfillment of God's covenant with God's people. Then good old Peter did what we often do – he tried to capture the moment in time by proposing to build three shelters to commemorate the union of Jesus, Elijah, and Moses. That is

when God interrupted Peter's plans by saying, 'This is my son, whom I love. Listen to him!' At that moment, the bus driver definitely moved that bus! The torch had been passed to Jesus to carry on.

It would be wonderful if we could say that from that day on the big three were completely in tune with Jesus' message and mission but that is not the case. Immediately after this experience, Jesus continued to teach, heal the sick, and patiently guide the disciples to carry on after Jesus returned to heaven. I am sure God would be pleased after we have experienced a miracle or moment of guidance from God that we too would be completely in tune with God. Our mountaintop experiences can take us to a closeness with God that may not be repeated. But at some point we need to come off the mountain and continue to serve God in our community. We need to take our communion

with God into some difficult situations. At times we may lose our focus on God. I find great comfort in Jesus' actions after the transfiguration experience, because he continued to shape and mold his disciples through prayer and teaching and action. He continued to work with imperfect beings, picking them up after every failure.

We are truly blessed to have the teachings of Jesus to also guide us in our times of need. Perhaps we are like Peter at times, impulsive and quick-to-action. Yet Jesus says to Peter, 'on this rock I will build my church.' Christianity would not have been realized without the strength, courage, and faith of the disciples of Jesus. Christianity would not have been realized without God sending his son as our Messiah to die for our sins. Christianity would not have been realized unless Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven. Christianity would not

have been realized if God had not sent the Holy Spirit as our guide to continue the work initiated with the life of Jesus on earth. We are to lay hands on the sick. We are to feed the hungry. We are to clothe the naked. We are to shelter the homeless. We are to be the living body of Christ to a hurting world. As we have been transformed, let us help others find that transforming power in Jesus Christ. ‘Bus driver, move that bus!’ Amen.