

# Last Sunday after the Epiphany

*Year B*

## **The Collect**

O God, who before the passion of your only-begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: Grant to us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **Old Testament**

### **2 Kings 2:1-12**

When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?” And he said, “Yes, I know; keep silent.”

Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they came to Jericho. The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?” And he answered, “Yes, I know; be silent.”

Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

When 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.” He 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.” As 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. Elisha 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.

## The Psalm

### Psalm 50:1-6

- 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 judgment 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.**

## The Epistle

### 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For 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.

## The Gospel

### Mark 9:2-9

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, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then 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." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. As 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.

The Gospel of the Lord.

## SERMON

Today is the last week in the season of Epiphany. When we think of the word Epiphany we think of an illuminating discovery, or a revealing scene or moment. We think of the lightbulb being turned on in our mind. That moment when we understand something and say, “Aha!” This morning it means an appearance or manifestation of a divine being.

It is fitting that today’s Gospel describes one of the greatest “epiphanies” ever – the Transfiguration of Jesus, complete with a view high upon a mountaintop, blinding light, a heavenly voice, and visions of Moses and Elijah.

All four Gospels tell the story of the Transfiguration. It reveals to us Jesus’ divine nature and his true identity. This is what we have waited for all season, the moment when Jesus dazzles us!

Back in 2015, fellow clergy told me that the day of my ordination will be like the Transfiguration of Jesus! There would be light and heavenly whispers and maybe an angel or two. It would immediately transform me!

Well, that day came and went, and I felt the same. My face didn't shine like the sun and my clothes didn't become white as light. Had I not changed?

But a friend who I hadn't seen in years, looked at me and said, "What happened? You're like a totally new person!" Hmm, maybe it just takes a while.

For me, God was subtle. I think I was still looking for God standing above me surrounded by blinding light and roaring thunder. And maybe God doesn't appear that way to everyone.

Maybe if we keep looking and expecting God in only the spectacular, we'll miss the God of the everyday. The God with whom we live, move, and breathe with.

We'll miss the God that's with us when we're at the market, or doing our laundry, or sitting next to us in the doctor's office. We'll miss the God in the conference room, or the classroom, or on that street corner. If we only look for and worship the extraordinary, we will never see and love the ordinary.

Until the Transfiguration, Peter and his fellow disciples knew Jesus as a teacher, a storyteller, a healer, and a traveling companion. He was familiar to them, his face, his way of talking, his mission. He was endearing and safe.

Then one day high on a mountaintop the unexpected happens. Before their very eyes, Jesus changes, becoming at once both fully himself and fully unrecognizable. The man they think they know is gone, but he is suddenly more.

Whenever we think we have God figured out, it's good to be reminded that we're wrong. Whenever we grow complacent, self-righteous, or lazy in our lives of faith, something changes. Sometimes it's a change we want, something positive and good. Sometimes it's a change that's painful and unbearable.

But when Peter sees the change in Jesus, he wants to stay on the mountaintop with him forever. Safe. Together. When Jesus told Peter what would happen next, Peter doesn't want Jesus to suffer, he wants to stay and protect him. But God says no.

They were terrified, and before Peter is even finished speaking, God covers them in a cloud and says, “*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!*” The disciples suddenly looked around and they saw no one except Jesus himself, alone. Finally, they see the divine in a familiar face.

Yes, “*listen to him.*” It’s Jesus’ way, the way of the cross, the way of humility, surrender, and sacrifice, this is the way that Peter must follow. And we must follow too. We all want mountaintop experiences but they may be few and far between. So, in the meantime, while we are waiting, we need to look for Jesus in the familiar.

Look for Him in the loving touch of a friend, in the voice of someone telling you, everything will be okay.

Look for him in prayer, in service, in discipleship, even in solitude.

Look for Him in the unending challenge of loving your neighbor as yourself and in sharing the word of God.

On this Transfiguration Sunday, we come to the end of another liturgical season. Having seen the bright lights of Epiphany, we prepare of the long darkness of Lent. We don't know what mountains and valleys lie ahead.

We can't predict how God will speak and where we will see Jesus.

But we know this, whether on the highest mountaintop or in the darkest valley, Jesus is there with us. Even as he blazes with holy light, his hand remains warm and solid on our shoulder as he guides us.

Even when we are down on our knees, lost in the wilderness, he whispers, do not be afraid. I am here with you.

Listen to him. Keep listening.



Look to him and pray, “change me.”

E pule kākou, let us pray.

O heavenly Father, *who hast* filled the world with beauty:  
Open our eyes to behold *thy* gracious hand in all *thy* works;  
that, rejoicing in *thy* whole creation, we may learn to serve  
*thee* with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all  
things were made, *thy* Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Amen.*

**Said Prayers:**

We pray for birthday wishes for Mary Smith in Virginia.

We pray for the EAM search committee narrowing down their field of candidates.

We pray for Caroline Williamson recovering from cancer surgery.

We pray for Fr Hau'oli who is struggling with his health.

We pray for presiding bishop Michael Curry who is unable to do his ecclesiastical duties.

We pray for Leohone's brother Ray and his wife Joy recovering from Covid.

**Said Announcements:**

The Cathedral Altar Guild ladies were here for a visit and loved our polished brass, sacristy, and memorial room!