

Luke 9:28-43a

Have you ever known something that you were just bursting to shout out, but couldn't until it was time? Like, maybe you're going to be a grandparent and you have been sworn to secrecy until the time is right. How difficult it must be to hold onto that information when all you want to do is tell everyone you know how excited you are. Maybe this is how the disciples felt, not being able to say anything about what they witnessed that day, until the time was right to tell? This is an important passage, their experience on that mountaintop needed to be told, but not until the time was right.

Do you see any parallels between the gospel reading and the Old Testament reading? The obvious is that Moses was in both. We know Moses died before the Israelites entered into the Promised Land. Yet he is standing with Jesus and Elijah. Elijah who was drawn into heaven by what was described as a wheel within a wheel. All of this is great fodder for the Ancient Alien theorists who would have you believe that a race of aliens visited the world and are still visiting. They would claim that the wheel in the wheel was a description of a spaceship. Ok. I'm not going there...

The other similarity between the two passages is that every time Moses came down the mountain after visiting with God his face shone. It shone so brightly that the people were afraid to come near him. He agreed to put a mask over his face to hide the brightness and he did that every time he came back down the mountain. Interesting how everyone agreed his mask would protect them, and no one questioned his decision to wear a mask... OK. I'm not going there either.....

But do you see the similarity.... Moses was in the presence of God and shone with a light too intense for the people to gaze upon. Jesus goes up the mountain with his disciples who, when the time is right, tell how he began to glow dazzling white. Can we infer from this that God was present? We know Jesus is God, and Jesus was there, but God the Father/Creator was there as well. Then, out of nowhere, Moses and Elijah appear. We have Elijah who represents the prophets, Moses who represents the law, and Jesus who is King. An interesting group of men to be sure, the three of them standing there, planning how Jesus would leave this world. Not as prophet, law, or king, but hung on a cross as a criminal.

Did the disciples actually hear that Jesus was discussing his departure, or was that something that was presumed after the time was right for them to tell about their mountaintop experience? And Peter, always the one to jump in with a suggestion, be it right or wrong, wants to gather them together to stay on this earth, not knowing that was impossible. A cloud cover formed over them, it must not have been any ordinary cloud, because they were terrified. The cloud blocked their vision so they were unable to see how Elijah and Moses left, because when they could see again those two men were gone. Before the cloud cleared a voice told them, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" we know it was God speaking, but those disciples just knew they heard a voice from the sky telling them to listen to their leader. It was Jesus, Peter, James, and John who made their way down the path from the mountaintop. The three disciples were overcome by fear, not able to tell anyone what they saw, until the time was right.

I think that those three disciples must have thought they were hot stuff after being with Jesus in the presence of Moses and Elijah up on that mountaintop. None of the other disciples

were invited to share in their adventure. Jesus must have thought an awful lot of them to include them in this visit. But they still didn't get it. They still thought Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, was going to overthrow the oppressive Roman rule and free the Jewish people from bondage, just as God had freed the Hebrew people under the leadership of Moses. They didn't realize that Jesus was there not to free them, but to free all people of all times, from the oppression of sin and death. Jesus overcame something far more important than the Roman government; he overcame evil by giving people a direct connection with God. No longer would people be slaves of sin, there was now a way for them to break free. Jesus took all sin upon himself when he died on that cross. But the 3 disciples didn't know that, and maybe they were pretty proud of themselves.

That was until the man whose son was demon possessed stepped up to say the disciples couldn't cure his son. I think that is why this narrative of the healing of the boy is added to the reading, so we can see that without Jesus, no matter how important we believe we may be, without Jesus we cannot accomplish what takes him a few simple words.

Yet Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians to act boldly. To act boldly because we have hope in Christ Jesus who set aside the veil so the Spirit of the Lord can lead us. We are Spirit led into becoming the image of Christ. Through Jesus we have the power to overcome that which oppresses us, that which holds us in bondage. As we prepare for this Lenten season, I invite you to examine your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to what it is that holds you back, that keeps you from being who God wants you to become. Ask for the Spirit to help you change so that you do not need to hide behind a veil.

I think each one of us has something we don't want to show other people. We pull a veil over us when we walk through the doors of the church so other people can't see where we fall short. When we hide our imperfections, we don't give others the opportunity to pray for us and with us. OK, so perhaps you don't want everyone to know your shortcomings, yet there should be a trusted few with whom you can confide and ask them to pray. Is it that our pride keeps us from opening up so that others can help us to become whole? Is it our pride that keeps us from transforming into the person God wants us to be in Jesus Christ?

It is God who has called us here together in this ministry, loved by God and loved by one another. God accepts us for who we are but loves us too much to leave us as we are, broken, sinful creatures. We have the freedom to overcome whatever it is that keeps us from transforming. We have the ability to shine with the light of Christ. Be a light in the darkness of this world. Speak out against injustice, pray for one another, and pray for peace. Don't let this be a secret that you are going to keep until it is too late. The time has come. All glory be to God.