

Sermon Preached at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Comforter
2701 Park Road, Charlotte, NC 28209
The Last Sunday after the Epiphany, February 14, 2010
Year C RCL [2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2; Luke 9:28-36]
The Reverend Scot McComas, Visiting Supply Priest

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of each of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, for you are our strength and redeemer. Amen.

Today's Gospel is one in which each of us can find ourselves. It is a story that is always appointed for this Last Sunday after the Epiphany, the Sunday that is immediately before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. This is the story of the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this story from Luke, Peter, James, and John went up the mountain to pray with Jesus. Suddenly they see Moses and Elijah, the people symbolizing the law and the prophets—two main facets of Judaism. The disciples were so overwhelmed they wanted to remain on the mountain top and build three dwellings, one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Jesus. However, that was not the intent Jesus had in mind. He did not take the three disciples to the mountain top to remain there forever, caught up in the glory of God, but to return to the farms and villages and continue to preach the good news. Peter, James, and John did not perceive this until God reminded them in the cloud of glory to listen to Jesus.

Sometimes, or oftentimes, we have trouble perceiving, too. Sometimes we need a cloud and loud voice over our heads to put us on the right path. The reason we can find ourselves in this story is that we can get caught up in wanting to be the best and brightest—as was the case with Peter, the senior disciple, and James and John, who usually at the urging of their mother, were so aggressive in always trying to be by the side of Jesus. There is nothing wrong with trying to do our best, but at what expense? James and John, at the urging of their overly officious mother, were always at the “front of the line.” They tried to outdo the other disciples to get the attention of Jesus, wanting to win the “I’m the best disciple” award—as if there were such a thing. James and John did not seem to care about the impact of their actions and showmanship. I can just see them, as they are coddled by their mother—being told they are the “smartest, best boys in the whole of Palestine” and they certainly believed that.

But we must not make the mistake of James and John trying to outshine others and climb our way to the top. How does our wanting to “be the best” impact the lives of others around us? At what expense do we do this? When we get caught up in trying to be Peter, James, and John, perhaps with earthly things such as fame, fortune, or power, we forget what our Lord teaches. We sometimes try and claw our way to the mountain top instead of living a life of

humility and meekness, a life of love and kindness, of charity and forgiveness, of doing good works and healing those around us.

One manner in which we can be reminded not to make the mistake of Peter, James, and John and what we can meditate on and pray about is what we find in the Epistle. We read, "...but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 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." Peter, James, and John saw the glory on the mountain top but did not perceive that the veil was to be removed and shared so that all could see—that the Spirit of the Lord is not to be contained but to be given to all and shared by all, and is thus, reflected in each of us, as though reflected in a mirror. Jesus always challenges us by what he said over and over again, "You see and yet you do not perceive."

A time in the church to concentrate on perceiving what our Lord teaches is this week as we begin Lent. On Ash Wednesday, a holy day of obligation for Christians, we concentrate on taking away the veils in our lives—the veils of pride and hypocrisy; the veils of impatience and self-indulgence; the veils of envy and greed; the veils of dishonesty and indifference; the veils of negligence and intolerance. Instead Christ shines through us as we see the glory of God in each other. We repent with contrite hearts our desire to keep it all to ourselves and trying to "set up shop" on the mountain top like Peter, James, and John tried. They focused on themselves solely instead of sharing the transformative experience of God with each and every person.

Each of us, including me, has at some time made the mistake of Peter, James, and John and either tried to claw our way to the mountain top or to rest comfortably, sometimes smugly, in our faith, thinking we have all the answers. But it's not about us; it's about God's Spirit working through us. Our faith is not stale; it's dynamic, ever changing, ever deepening as we walk closer with Christ and closer to an Easter faith.

As we walk to Jerusalem this Lent, may we, who behold the light of God's countenance, be strengthened, humbled, challenged, and changed into Christ's likeness each and every day. May we take the veil off and share that light of Christ with all. Amen.