

## The Twelve | Enrolled in the School of Jesus (B)

### *The Transfiguration*

Luke 9.28-37; 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1.16-19  
March 1, 2020

*Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. <sup>30</sup> And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup> who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. <sup>33</sup> And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah"-- not realizing what he was saying. <sup>34</sup> While he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup> Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" <sup>36</sup> And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Peter* For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. <sup>17</sup> For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"-- <sup>18</sup> and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. <sup>19</sup> So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

We're looking at the HOW Jesus Christ mentored His disciples. All four Gospels include this major theme: He led them on a deliberate journey of discovery.

Last week, Phil showed us what he called the peak moment in the Gospels and the Training of the Twelve i.e. when Jesus puts the question, "Who do you say that I am?" When they answer that question, it's as if Jesus says, "Good! You know that I AM the Messiah – now you need to know WHAT a Messiah IS! Because you don't yet know that!"

Then Jesus confronts a kind of virus that threatens disciples and He introduces the vaccine/antidote. The virus is pessimism and gloom arising from bad stuff we see around us AND often from a misreading of Scripture. And the remedy for this uptight, fearful, self-defensive, "cynicism virus" is... EPIPHANY!

An epiphany is a revelation; the moment the light comes on. It's also a season on the church calendar that starts with the coming of the Magi (the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles) and the Season of Epiphany ends with Transfiguration Sunday (last week) where today's text is normally the focus. Epiphany! It's a breakthrough or realization, a sudden paradigm-shift, an awe-inspiring eye-opening moment.

Jesus arranged this epiphany, this transfiguration, to protect the twelve from the mistaken notion that EVIL is winning. AND in OUR time/place, with all that's happening politically, socially, morally, internationally AND the stuff we all have in our own little lives (some really tough stuff) all or which MIGHT lead us to feel overwhelmed, frustrated, and even cynical and anxious, annoyed/self-protective – WE NEED THIS EPIPHANY as a gift from Jesus Christ – an antidote to turn worry to wonder.

Let's look at: 1) The First Lesson Acknowledged  
 2) The Second Exodus Accomplished and  
 3) The Third Man Alone (and what that teaches us)

The First Lesson learned is that this Rabbi IS the long-awaited Messiah... the One we learn about in the Law and the Prophets is arrived... And the disciples have just now reached that conclusion. It's the goal toward which Jesus was working and when it's clear to Him that His disciples have learned it, He puts that famous pop-quiz: "Who do people say that I am? And who do YOU say that I am?"

Peter, as we might guess, Peter speaks for the whole group...from Luke CH 9 (immediately before today's text): "And He said to them, 'But who do YOU say that I am?' And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." (9.20)

And then IMMEDIATELY...Jesus Christ moves on to the next lesson – "OK...you know that I AM the Christ but DO you know what a Christ IS...and DOES?"

And they all say, "Oh...definitely...absolutely...yep... we're crystal clear on that one!"

But knowing that they have NO IDEA... the Rabbi tells them, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day." And... they act like they know what He's saying but really they ONLY have the FIRST LESSON...and have no idea what He means about dying and about resurrection...and He'll have to tell them again and again... e.g. (just a few verses after today's text) "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." (44)

But they have NO PLACE in their thinking for a Messiah who'll be betrayed and who will DIE. AND they have NO IDEA that THEY TOO will go that way!

And then He says (after the identity question is settled and they KNOW He's the Christ) He says He WILL be rejected and HE WILL DIE and THIS WILL BE THE PATH TO GLORY/TRIUMPH/KINGSHIP...and HE ADDS, "And some of YOU will see MY KINGDOM even before YOU DIE..."

AND then He takes the ones He has in mind...Peter (the spokesman), John (the beloved) and James (the first martyr), He takes them UP TO THE MOUNTAIN to SEE the Kingdom of God. HE PRAYS AND HE'S CHANGED...His face changes...His clothing is white and luminous...blinding light and brightness!

"Some eight days after these sayings" – first lesson's acknowledged ("WHO am I?" – "YOU ARE THE CHRIST") and NOW the next lesson is about WHAT A CHRIST IS and what He will DO... it's about a "Second Exodus."

Moses and Elijah have come back from the other side... Luke's the only one (Matt, Mark AND Luke all include the episode) but only Luke tells us WHAT they discussed: "appearing in glory, they were speaking of His 'EXODUS', (there were other, more common words for departure!) which He was about to accomplish." Luke uses that Greek word intentionally because Moses knew a thing or two ABOUT Exodus... Moses led the FIRST EXODUS when he liberated the Israelites from slavery in Egypt...

And "the Christ" will complete a second liberation – He will DO something...He will DO what He's been telling the disciples but what THEY can't understand. And THAT IS HOW GOD WILL LIBERATE HIS PEOPLE... "the Christ will suffer and die, be killed and be raised up on the third day... like the Passover Lamb in the First Exodus (a substitute, its blood smeared on the beams)... The disciples have NO idea what this Second Exodus means... BUT Moses and Elijah DO.

It's like Jesus Christ had to tell someone what was coming but NO ONE on earth had any concept of the Christ dying for His people...SO GOD HAD TO GIVE HIS SON SOME CONVERSATION PARTNERS FROM OUTSIDE THIS WORLD...Moses and Elijah...the Law and the Prophets from THE OTHER SIDE!

The disciples fall asleep in prayer...but when they wake up (32 "fully awake" – NOT a dream!) there's all this Exodus imagery: the Mountain and the cloud of God's glory... Peter sees all these signs and symbols, and says, "Lord, it's good to be here! How many people get to meet the Law and the Prophets embodied...Moses and Elijah? WOW! Lord, if You are in their league...YOU must be way more important than we thought!!... Let's set up three tabernacles and stay with you three heroes!" (v.33 "Peter...not realizing what he was saying" – like so many of us, we don't know what to say so we just keep talking!)

Then the cloud engulfs them...and the disciples know that in the FIRST Exodus, when the cloud came on the tabernacle (the worship tent) it meant God was there... (Ex 40.35) and they think

they're going to die as they go INTO the cloud... but then OUT OF the cloud comes a Voice, "This is My Son, My Chosen One, LISTEN TO HIM."

And when they look up...the super important men from beyond...are GONE... 'turns out, HE IS not in their league AFTER ALL!... He is infinitely ABOVE them... HE is unique and HE DOESN'T NEED A TABERNACLE because He IS the Tabernacle... He IS the dwelling of God on earth... He's not only shining ... HE IS THE LIGHT: "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (John 1.4-5)

And those three disciples really didn't comprehend it; in fact in Matthew and Mark ...Jesus Christ tells the three disciples NOT to tell anyone about this until after His resurrection and they say, "Sure thing, Lord...not a word till after the resurrection!" and then they turn to one another and ask, "Uh...what's a resurrection?!" (Mark 9.10)

So that's it – the First Lesson Acknowledged ...the Second Exodus Accomplished...and last, The Third Man Alone - and what THAT teaches US – SO what DOES it teach us?

Well...IT'S an epiphany... conclusion to the Season of Epiphany...it's a moment when the curtain is pulled back and we see into the Great Beyond – it's the apocalypse/uncovering/revelation of Jesus Christ.

They were seeing Him THEN...as He will be seen in the future. It's like the vision of Him in the last book of the Bible – "The Apocalypse/Revelation of Jesus Christ"... The Law and the Prophets are bearing Him witness... Moses and Elijah are there to say, "YES! This is the One we saw from many centuries ago...Isaiah saw the train of His robe filled the Temple in the Prophet Isaiah's vision...we saw His glory from afar and now HERE HE IS"...And the three disciples (v.32) "SAW His glory"

It's the epiphany they really NEEDED because when they see Him complete the Second Exodus and like the Passover Lamb, He'll be slain and pierced and what they see, on the cross, will be anything but glorious.

They will all run away from Him and He will look like a monster...and they won't be able to look (Isa. 53.2-3) but on the mountain they were given a vision of the End-Game... He's passing through shame...ON HIS WAY TO GLORY...He will be snuffed out and immersed in MY darkness...He will take MY blame...and become hideous in the sight of the Father.

And I need to see now...that His gruesome death is NOT the final word...He will humble Himself and God, the Father will exalt Him...the Father loves Him with infinite approval and joy and love... and YOU NEED TO SEE THIS...because THIS vision will get you through any horror you could possibly see.

He is the One we've been waiting for...the Law and the Prophets showed up to hail Him and look into His Exodus-plan – how He will liberate the world and save everyone who trusts Him.

“LISTEN TO HIM” – it's good to listen to the Law and the Prophets because they gave us God's word ...but HE IS GOD'S Word...He is the Mind of God...the Heart of God revealed in the FLESH.

LISTEN TO HIM - “Hear, O Israel: the LORD is our God, the LORD is one!” (Deu 6.4-5) He is the LORD of “The Shema”...the Creed of the Hebrew Bible and He is the One who fulfills the Law ...and the Prophets.

Moses and Elijah are special...but they can't save us...IN FACT they NEED a Savior and HE IS NOW REVEALED.

This is how the world will end... this is a glimpse of the New Adam, the Beloved of the Father full of grace and truth ... this is Man as He was meant to be...glorious (Ps 8.5) And this is how WE will be in the resurrection, *“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.”* (1 John 3.2)

There was a television program in the '90s called, “Early Edition” about a man who mysteriously receives the Chicago Sun-Times newspaper the day before it's actually published... And you can imagine how that would alter your investment strategy if you knew in advance what stocks were going to make gains...what horses were going to “WIN-PLACE-SHOW.”

Well, in THIS epiphany on the mountain, OUR Early Edition, God gives us “insider trading information” and invites us (by grace) to invest: “LISTEN TO HIM.”

Attach yourself to Him by faith...invest yourself completely because YOU see how the crucifixion will end: with atonement, resurrection, Exodus, liberation, New Creation for everyone who believes...

We don't see it now...the world looks pretty scary...our love is pretty weak...we wish we could see change in the world and in ourselves... *“But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone”.* (Heb 2.9)

Listen to Him (9.44)...not just His teaching but His whole Person... His Exodus accomplished by the most unexpected of means (death, loss, weakness, and resurrection!) for all who believe... receive the Epiphany...hear the eyewitnesses and the Word of the prophets NOW confirmed...

YOU CAN AFFORD TO LOVE...to give, to deny yourself...to take up your cross and follow...to invest/entrust everything to Him.

The Church, the people of Jesus should be the most optimistic, joyful, secure people in the world... because WE know how it ends.

Journalists may exaggerate for the sake of clicks, but the foreboding is more than just a media narrative. **I personally have a lot easier time thinking up reasons to despair about the future than reasons to hope.** Most of them have to do with the Internet, all the disembodied shouting and polarization and posturing.

**Yet doesn't every generation believe they are living through the "end of history"?** There's something deeply hubristic in the conviction that our specific problems will be the ones to do in the human race. They more than likely aren't. **Sure, there will always be weeds in the flowerbed, and sometimes they'll grow so tall you can't see the blooms. But that does not mean the blooms aren't still there.**

- David Zahl, "Three Things That Aren't Grim About the Future" (*MBird.com*; Feb 25, 2020; emphasis added)

Would there be a people of God that embrace an eschatology of hope, **such that we might fight despair and bring a tangible help to the world as we know it**, not of simply saving souls for the sweet bye and bye. **The church then might become a place that reorients otherwise pessimists into people of hope**, not just of an ethereal future, but of today as well.

- Dan van Voorhis, "The Hidden Dangers of the Narrative of Decline" (*virtueinthewasteland.com* 3/22/18 emphasis added)

epiph·a·ny | \ i-'pi-fə-nē \ *plural epiphanies*

**1 capitalized** : January 6 observed as a church festival in commemoration of the coming of the Magi as the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles or in the Eastern Church in commemoration of the baptism of Christ

**2**: an appearance or manifestation especially of a divine being

**3a (1)**: a usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something **(2)**: an intuitive grasp of reality through something (such as an event) usually simple and striking **(3)**: an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure

**b**: a revealing scene or moment

- "epiphany." *Merriam-Webster.com*. 2011.  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com> (25 Feb 2020).