

Sunday, February 11, 2018

2 Kings 2:1-12

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Mark 9:2-9

Transformed by God to Serve

Driving around the city I notice other vehicles especially when stopped at traffic lights. I look at license plates and bumper stickers. Whenever I see an interesting one I always take a glance at the person who is driving the car just to get a glimpse of the person who would drive around with a these plates or bumper sticker.

A few of the bumper stickers that I have seen either on a car or through the internet:

What If The Hokey Pokey Is What It's All About?

Driver Carries No Cash - Married!

I'm Retired - Go Around Me!

Normal People Scare Me!

Save Our Planet - It's The Only One With Chocolate!

I Get Along With God Just Fine; It's His Fan Clubs I Can't Stand!

Do You Follow Jesus This Closely?

This last one is good with it not only being funny but asks the reader a question of truth. How close are you in your relationship with Jesus? This is the last Sunday of the season after Epiphany. Epiphany is the season in which we have heard stories of faithful people who have been called by God to serve—Samuel to serve as a young boy, Jonah to go to Ninevah, and Moses who received God's commandments. The prophet Elijah has also served God through faith and as we read to day he was taken up into heaven in a whirlwind. It is this same Elijah that Peter, James and John see with Moses on the mountainside experience with Jesus. In this season of Epiphany God has revealed Jesus to those who did not know him—the Wise Men of the east, and those people who were called by him to follow in his ministry on earth. But how closely did they follow?

From time to time we need to examine how closely we are following Jesus. We ask, "What would Jesus do?" We want to be like Christ. We claim to be followers of Christ but how closely are we following him and what does it mean to follow him? Our reading from Mark is the story of Jesus' Transfiguration and is a good example of how misguided we can sometimes be about following Jesus. Jesus needed a break and so he took Peter, James, and John up a mountain for a spiritual retreat. Jesus "was transfigured before them " that is he started to glow

and then Elijah and Moses appeared. Peter thought it would be a good idea for all of them to stay up on that mountain to capture the moment in time because here in front of them were the faithful people of God from many generations before. He had heard their life stories and how they had served God. Peter even offered to help build a house for all of them on the side of the mountain!

It's kind of funny when you think about it. Peter must have thought it was cool to be up there with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Why not stay there forever and not deal with the realities of life? What Peter did not realize was that the special moment on that mountain was not about escaping the world on a retreat; it was about God confirming once again that Jesus was his Son and he would die and then rise from the dead. Peter was one of Jesus' closest followers but it seemed he really did not want Jesus to change and become the Saviour who would suffer and die. After all, it was the week before when Jesus told them about how he was going to suffer-rejection by teachers, elders and chief priests; and how he was going to be killed. Peter had even rebuked Jesus for saying these things.

Yet here they all were on the side of the mountain- Elijah, Moses, Jesus, Peter, James and John. Then they are enveloped by a cloud—a heavy fog descended upon them all and this is when they hear the voice of God—“this is my Son, whom I love; Listen to him.” What does this mean? God again has revealed his Son to even Jesus' closest followers and they are still unsure.

Suddenly they looked around again and they only saw Jesus. As they followed Jesus back down that mountain he tried to tell them, but they still did not understand. They did not understand that they were following a man who would die and then live again and if they were serious about following him, they would have to die too- that is they like us would need to confess or profess their faith and believe in Jesus. It means that they like us would need to put their words into actions.

When we think about how close we are to God we might think—I want to have him in control of my life, but still be able to make decisions on my own. I want God to guide me and yet at the same time enable me to choose the path I follow. And this is what following God in Christ is about.

Jesus being transfigured is an amazing shining moment but it is not disconnected with what is to come for God's Son. Jesus prophesizes his death and he knows that this is what he was born to do- save his people. But how disheartening it must have been for him when his closest followers—Peter, James, John aren't sure what to believe or do.

How close are you to Jesus? Just think about your circle of intimacy where would you place Jesus? Imagine intrinsic circles with you in the centre- who is with you in your circle? Is Jesus? The next circle out would be a spouse or former spouse; then the next circle outward would be your children and their families and then as you go away from your family you would include your church family, and then may be your friends and acquaintances, work colleagues and then of course people you meet semi regularly- your hairdresser/ barber/ newspaper carrier, mail carrier..etc.. Where might you put Jesus- today?

Is his glowing causing you to be afraid of him or are you drawn closer to him like moths because he is the Light? Paul states in 2 Corinthians that the small g gods of this world draw us away from the light of God. Our attention is easily diverted from God and the good news of Jesus. Yet Christ still shines for us. Christ is with us always and Jesus will lead us to be transformed and changed.

As we prepare for our Annual Meeting let us take a moment to reflect on how Jesus has changed you in this last year. Do you feel closer to Jesus? Is he close in your circle of intimacy? What does this mean as you look to serving your church? What does it mean for your church as you seek new ways to serve your Saviour?

The church of Jesus seeks those who are willing to be changed and transformed by God's Spirit. You have been changed and now it is up to you to respond to serve. We need each other and we need you. Let us respond to God's voice as he spoke on the mountainside; This is my beloved Son; Listen to him. Let us listen to God's voice in this time of silence.

SILENCE

Praise be to you O God for your Spirit touches our hearts. Enable us to respond as we seek you and love you for who you are. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Following Jesus is the greatest thing in the world but it is also the hardest thing in the world to do. Following Jesus is more than showing up to worship one hour a week. Following Jesus is more than....