

Commentary to the Second Sunday of Lent (C)

The Transfiguration–The Plan



Peter, James and John did not want it to end. What did they not want to end? They didn't want this special touch of heaven, this transformation or transfiguration of the Lord, this visit by Moses and Elijah, none of this, they didn't want any of it to end. "Let's put up tents," they said. "Let's hold on to this moment," they meant. But it had to end. It all had to end because the plan had to take place. The plan. Moses and Elijah appeared to speak about the Exodus. Not the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, but the Exodus of the new people of God from a world of terror and sin to a world of love and peace. The people will be led to this new world by the new Moses, Jesus. They will hear the truth of God from the new prophet, the new Elijah, Jesus. And so the plan was set into motion. The plan itself existed from the beginning of time.

We heard the first suggestion of the plan in the Book of Genesis, in the Garden of Eden, when God tells the devil that one will come who will crush the devil's head with his heel. We come to a deeper understanding of the plan in the last book of Scripture, the Book of Revelation. Let me share this with you. In the fourth chapter of Revelation, John, the prophet of Revelation, has a vision of heaven. He sees a throne of light, glowing like the most beautiful gems. Around the throne are the twenty four elders, most probably the twelve sons of Jacob, the leaders of the 12 groups or tribes of Israel, and the twelve apostles, the leaders of the new Israel. The One who is Forever is seated on the throne. All worship the living God. Then in the beginning of chapter 5 a scroll is brought out. The book is God's plan for his people. It had been sealed by seven seals because man had rejected God and rejected his plan. "Who is worthy to break open the seals?," a mighty angel asks.

God had given creation over to mankind. Mankind would remain entrusted with creation. Someone who is human would have to break open the seal. This someone had to be willing to have complete faith and trust in God the Father. The prophet began to weep because there did not appear to be anyone who could save the world, there did not appear to be anyone worthy of breaking open the seals. "Do not weep," the angel said to the prophet, "The lion of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed. He is worthy of opening up the seal. God's plan of love for his people will be restored." And then, instead of a mighty, conquering King, instead of a lion, the prophet sees a lamb, a lamb who had been killed yet still lives. This lamb opens the seals. Jesus restores God's love to the world by trusting completely in his Father. His triumph is our triumph.

His sacrifice has restored God's love to the world. This was the plan discussed by Moses and Elijah with Jesus on that mountain. One of our traditional prayers during Lent is the Stations of the Cross. Meditation on the Stations often leads us to ask, "Why? Why did Jesus have to suffer so much?" The answer is difficult. Jesus put complete trust in God. He was the antithesis of Adam. God would not be pushed aside. He would remain faithful no matter what the cost. The ability to save the world from evil was in his hands. Nothing, no amount of pain and suffering would sway him from his determination counter the first Adam's prideful sin with his own loving humility. Sin was in control of the world. Sin is in control of the world. But sin has been and is being conquered through the sacrifice, the blood of Christ. We are all part of this, you know.

The blood of Christ is fighting off the devil and evil in my life and in your lives. Instead of focusing on whether the leaders of the Jews or the Romans were responsible for Jesus' suffering and death, we should realize that we are responsible. Jesus died for us because we needed him to beat off sin in each of our lives. That was the plan. It was greater and more significant than the plan Moses fulfilled when he delivered the people from the Pharaoh. The plan held a deeper truth than that which was proclaimed by Elijah and all the prophets. The plan was the recreation of the world through faith, through love, and through sacrifice. This plan that Jesus and Moses and Elijah discussed is not tied down into a particular historical moment. The effects of evil are not limited to the past. We all suffer from evil. Worse, we all partake in evil.

The conquest of evil by the Lord continues. The sacrifice continues. Yes, we have nailed him to the cross, but he has suffered and died for each of us. But this is not the only way that we are part of that plan discussed before luminous faces. This is just the negative way. There is also the wonderful and beautiful positive aspect to the plan. We, as followers of Jesus Christ, are capable of continuing his presence and his love in the world. It is up to us to make his suffering, death and resurrection a living reality to a world that is repulsed at the very concept of sacrifice. It is up to us to allow others to also be part of the plan. The world experienced a great transformation the day the Lord died. Love conquered hate; faith conquered pride, and evil was defeated. That is the reason why we call that Friday, Good Friday. The Lord went up a mountain and was transfigured. A short time later, He was raised on a Cross, and we are transformed.

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