

Our First Reading today continues the Genesis story from last week, when we saw Adam and Eve fall from grace. Now God promises Abraham that all of the families of the earth will be redeemed, will be blessed, will be given the gift of salvation through a descendant of Abraham. That descendant of Abraham will be Jesus.

And that's what Paul talks about in the 2nd reading. Did you ever notice that in Ordinary Time, our 2nd Reading doesn't usually connect to the 1st Reading and the Gospel. In Ordinary Time, we go through one of Paul's letters in a "sort-of-continuous" way from week to week. But during Lent, the Church chooses passages that follow a "theme." For Lent, the themes of sin, penance, salvation and resurrection can be heard.

Today, Paul describes the initial gift of salvation at the beginning of our life of grace at Baptism. God gives us this gift through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. And that is how, through Baptism, through the blessing of Abraham, the love of God is going to come to the Israelites and to the whole world. And that has been God's design from before time began. If you want to know how God's plan works in our lives, "listen to him!"

Any first-century Jew would have seen several things in common between the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor and the description of Moses on Mount Sinai. In our Bible Studies, we call this typology. When Moses went up the mountain to meet God, he brought Aaron, Nadab and Abihu. Jesus brings Peter, James and John for the same reason.

When Moses went up the mountain, the glory cloud of the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai and "God spoke to Moses from the cloud." In today's Gospel, the voice of the Father speaks from the cloud.

When Moses came down from Mt. Sinai, his face shone with the glory of having been in the presence of God, but Jesus, because of his appearance and the voice of the Father, is revealed as the divine son of God.

In the Book of Kings, Elijah goes up Mount Sinai and experiences the presence of God. He hears that still, small voice on that same mountain.

So these two figures, Moses and Elijah, who encountered God on the top of a mountain in the Old Testament are now present with Jesus for this revelation of God in the New Testament. In Jesus, they get to see the face of God – the God they could not see when they lived on this earth.

In Jesus, we see the fulfillment of so many Old Testament characters. In Jesus, we see a new Isaac coming to sacrifice his life so the blessing promised to Abraham can come to the whole world. In Jesus, we see a new King David coming to restore the kingdom and the covenant. In Jesus, we see a new anointed servant coming to begin the messianic age that Isaiah predicted.

When Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus, it said a cloud overshadowed them, and the disciples fall on their faces because they know that when the glory cloud comes down, God himself is in their presence.

So Jesus is preparing Peter, James and John for the upcoming events in Jerusalem, where they will see Jesus treated with evil that goes beyond anger and cruelty. Peter, James and John have lived with Jesus and know that he is fully human, but now he shows them that he is also a divine person - the glorious son of the Father. That's the mystery of the Transfiguration. It's OK that we don't have everything about it figured out. But we do have enough witnesses to tell us of God's plan for us from before time began.

We need to hear the Transfiguration story because we weren't up on that mountain. We need to know that there is more to this life than what we can see every day. There is more to this

life than science can describe. There is more to this life than what we see on our newsfeed and on YouTube. There is more to this life than we can imagine with our human minds.

But Peter, James and John have to come down the mountain. It's not time yet for them to stay in the glory of the Trinity. There's another mountain Jesus has to climb first, and that is going to be Calvary.

I hope you can see the Transfiguration and the crucifixion as two bookends around the second part of Jesus' ministry – his journey to Calvary. As we see Jesus appearing to the disciples in his glory on the mount of the Transfiguration, we celebrate today the unveiling of the divine life and the immortality that he brings us through his cross and resurrection.

Lent is a great time to stop our busy lives and gather as a community in church to hear what God wants to say to us and to receive the daily bread that will nourish us on our journey.

Too many of the baptized now live as if God does not exist. But God has given us the gift of our faith. It's up to us to use that gift of faith to see our world in a different way. It's up to us to use that gift of faith to hear the voice who draws us to Jesus and invites us to listen to him. It's up to us to use that gift of faith to live our life as a climb up a mountain to see the glory of God in this man we call Jesus of Nazareth. It's up to us to use that gift of faith to know that after this life, we can return to him and live in eternity with him in his kingdom.

Amen?

With thanks to Brant Pitre and John Bergsma.

- Deacon Jack Schaefer