

Homily for the Second Sunday of Lent – Year C March 17, 2019



Scripture Readings: Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18 ✠ Psalm 27:1, 7-9, 13-14 ✠ Philippians 3:20-4:1 ✠ Luke 9:28b-36



One Sunday morning, several years ago, the late Steven Covey was on a subway in New York. People, he said, were sitting quietly; some were reading newspapers, some seemed to be lost in thought, some were resting with their eyes closed. He said it was a calm and peaceful scene. But then a man and his children entered the subway car. The children were so loud and boisterous that, in an instant, the whole climate on the train was transformed.

The man sat down next to Mr. Covey and closed his eyes, seemingly oblivious to the behavior of his children. The children were yelling at each other, throwing things, they were even grabbing people's papers out of their hands. It was very upsetting. And yet, the man sitting next to Mr. Covey did nothing to stop his children from upsetting everyone on the train.

Mr. Covey was very irritated. He could not believe that this man could be so insensitive to let his children act that way and do nothing about it, taking no accountability. It was obvious that everyone on the subway was annoyed. Finally, with what he felt was unusual patience and restraint, Mr. Covey turned to him and said, "Sir, your children are really disturbing a lot of people. I wonder if you couldn't control them a little more?"

"The man," he said, "lifted his gaze as if to come to a consciousness of the situation for the first time and said softly, 'Oh, you're right. I guess I should do something about it. We just came from the hospital where their mother died about an hour ago. I don't know what to think, and I guess they don't know how to handle it either.'"

Mr. Covey said, "Can you imagine what I felt at that moment?" His perspective changed so drastically. He suddenly saw things differently, he felt differently, he behaved differently. His annoyance disappeared. He didn't have to worry about controlling his attitude or behavior; his heart was filled with the man's pain, and he said, "Your wife just died? Oh, I'm so sorry. Can you tell me about it? What can I do to help?" The entire situation, or his perspective of it, changed in an instant.

Our Scripture readings today challenge us to change our perspective on the things of faith and our place in God's plan. Scripture tells us that God's ways are not our ways and God's plans are not our plans. So often this is difficult for us to accept because there are so

many things vying for our attention and devotion that we have little time or energy to seek to know God's ways and, sometimes, we just want our ways and our plans to become God's ways and plans, instead of the other way around.

Our first reading and our Gospel reading could be easily misinterpreted simply as magic tricks or special effects that God uses to get our attention. But they are actually pointing to something much deeper and something much more powerful.

In our first reading, Abram is plummeted into darkness; his perspective changes and he sees that, without God, there is nothing for him except darkness and fear. In the midst of this darkness and fear, God comes to him and makes a covenant with him, promising great things to him and his descendants.

In our Gospel reading today, we see the miracle of the Transfiguration: Peter, James, and John saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus as it changed, as his clothes became dazzling white and as he stood and talked with the prophets. Then, a cloud of darkness overcame them, and in the midst of their fear, they heard the voice of God say, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." With that, the "special effects" were over. Jesus was alone again, looking just like he did before they climbed the mountain.

But things were different. The real miracle was that Peter, James, and John were given a new perspective and a new understanding. They heard the voice of God and they knew that Jesus was the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

As followers of Jesus, we are challenged to change our perspective – not to hear the words of Scripture and ask, "What does it mean to me?" which is a narrow perspective. But to ask, "What does the Holy Spirit intend for me to know and understand? What does God want me to do?" which is a wider perspective.

If we really listen to the words of God in today's Gospel, He speaks of relationship first and then commandment. He says, "This is my beloved Son." Then He says, "Listen to Him." First and foremost, God wants us to be in a loving relationship with Him; God wants us to be with Him forever in heaven. The commandment is the way to achieve that – following His beloved Son, listening to Him, and sharing His love with others so that we and they will have eternal life. ✠