



Second Sunday Lent 2005.

Genesis 12: 1-4 2 Timothy 1: 18-10 Matthew 17: 1-9

Today's readings are about change. Whole sections of book shops are devoted to change. You can change your business style, your religion and now you can change your physical body, feature by feature. Television shows are dedicated to make-overs. This form of insanity seems to be spreading and while the focus is squarely on the externals the understanding of change expressed in the scriptures is being lost.

The account of the transfiguration in Matthew is a vision story about change. If we were to read this story as the account of a literal event we would miss out on the layers of meaning within the narrative. This is a story which moves both backwards and forwards in time.

Matthew tells us that *along the way*, a metaphor for the Christian journey, the disciples are given an insight into who Jesus is and what his role will be in the development of God's kingdom.

The setting of the story is a mountain. This setting signifies the place of God's revelation. Jesus appears changed physically as Moses was when he received the commandments from God as we read, "he did not know that his face had become radiant while he talked with the Lord." Ex. 34:39.

This is the first truth about spiritual change. It is the closeness to God that offers the gift of spiritual growth not our own effort.

We are told that the disciples saw Moses and Elijah with Jesus. When the Jewish people described their sacred writings they used three categories, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The presence of Moses and Elijah in the story brings to mind the foundations of Jewish religious tradition.

This brings us to the second point about spiritual change. We are transformed through our growing understanding of the Word of God revealed to us through our sacred writings.

As well as the visual content of the story there is a verbal element. There is the conversation between Jesus, Moses and Elijah to which we are not privy. Then there is Peter's response, he proclaims the need that the disciples have to *hold on to* the vision. Peter thinks in terms of a shrine to mark a sacred place.

The response from God is a reminder of the vision at Jesus' baptism. There is only one true shrine of God and that is the obedient listening heart.

The third point about spiritual change is that the obedient heart leads us away from complacency and into the active love of each other. The vision is to be carried in the heart. The journey must go on and the vision becomes nourishment for the journey.

Abraham and Sarah are models of the quest. They heard the call to change in their mature years, to leave the settled life and strike out into the unknown.

The letter to Timothy reminds us once more that real change is entered into in faith and we hear echoes of Jesus' "Fear not!"

We are called to a holy life, not because we are more deserving but through the free gift of God. We know of this great gift because Jesus who went before us now offers it to us.

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