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| **The Lessons Appointed for Use on the** | http://www.lectionarypage.net/Art/Newshield.gif |
| Last Sunday after the Epiphany |
| Year B RCL |

2 Kings 2:1-12

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Mark 9:2-9

Psalm 50:1-6

**The Collect**

O God, who before the passion of your only-begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: Grant to us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.*Amen.*

**Old Testament**

**2 Kings 2:1-12**

When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?” And he said, “Yes, I know; keep silent.”

Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they came to Jericho. The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?” And he answered, “Yes, I know; be silent.”

Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.” Elisha said, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.” He responded, “You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.” As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, “Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

**The Response**

**Psalm 50:1-6**

***Deus deorum***

1 The Lord, the God of gods, has spoken; \*  
he has called the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

2 Out of Zion, perfect in its beauty, \*  
God reveals himself in glory.

3 Our God will come and will not keep silence; \*  
before him there is a consuming flame,  
and round about him a raging storm.

4 He calls the heavens and the earth from above \*  
to witness the judgment of his people.

5 "Gather before me my loyal followers, \*  
those who have made a covenant with me  
and sealed it with sacrifice."

6 Let the heavens declare the rightness of his cause; \*  
for God himself is judge.

**The Epistle**

**2 Corinthians 4:3-6**

Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake. For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**The Gospel**

**Mark 9:2-9**

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

On my trip to Israel while I was in seminary, we went to the place where the transfiguration reportedly took place, where people say it did anyway. There is a church on top of the mount, from which one looks down and sees valleys all around, and on each side of the church is a little cupola, inside one cupola there is a painting on the wall of Moses and inside the other side a painting of Elijah.

At least in Mark’s account of the transfiguration, Jesus doesn’t say they should not make huts or dwelling spots, as clearly later someone thought they should. Instead in this gospel, it’s just that everything terrifying keeps on being terrifying. Peter suggests making dwelling I suspect because he doesn’t know what else to do. An encounter this very close to the holy is nothing less than terrifying. I think most of us prefer our holy encounters to be from a distance. The disciples wanted to capture the moment of the transfiguration, but they couldn’t. The nature of it, even in Jesus, is fleeting. Jesus did not truly change; he still was who he was, but the disciples were able to see who he was, the Divine, for a moment. That moment was life altering, and direction altering.

I do believe it is God’s desire that we are all changed. In some ways, we are all supposed to be transfigured by God. That is the goal, the desire. God wants relationship and change in each and everyone of us. God wants to change each of us, give us light from inside into out. Even if we are not to be like Jesus, we could be like Moses or Elijah. God wants each of us to let our God light shine into the world.

It seems to me that for the great majority of us, this transfiguration magic doesn’t happen, transfiguration doesn’t happen, we will live on this side of glory most of the time and at death, we (might) have faith that we move to glory. We may pray for closeness to God, we may pray for strength, and most of the time—still—we feel not much or **nada**. And that makes sense, if Jesus was only transfigured for a short while, why should we be any different? Why should it “take”?

Some of you may know that I hold dear the story of Mother Teresa. Legend has it that she did not want her journals made public upon her death. However, of course her journals were made public, and what we learned is the Mother Teresa did all her work in the world based on just one time where she knew God in her life. One time she saw the world differently, she saw it changed… transfigured. It is not as if she had an ongoing relationship with Christ, but instead just one time made all the difference. Maybe we should be like that, be more like a mirror. Seeing Christ, seeing the holy and bouncing it back into the world to bring more light to others.

To see Jesus, the Word transfigured- to see the world as transfigured is not to be some spiritual guru, it is not to be pious, it is not to preach a prosperity gospel that you do all these particular things and then the stars align for you and you gain favor and you are blessed for ever more.

NO!

It is what we pray and ask God —-it is something simple which turns out to be rather complicated. We pray a prayer with two parts that are not in opposition to each other but follow one from the other… we pray “strengthen us to bear our cross AND be changed into his likeness from glory to glory.”

We are to be the body and blood of Christ in the world. We too are to bear a cross. The cross we bear at least in part involves seeing the world and others transfigured. It changes our perspective. It also allows others to see us as transfigured, even if we don’t feel it.

Yes, Jesus’s body was broken for us, but we are to love freely and that involves some breaking on our part, some embracing of our humanity to know that breaking is not the same as crumbling, breaking is being human. The in-breaking of Christ is a breaking, a transfiguration, a changing— a breaking of pride, a breaking of our part in broken relationships, a breaking of things that stop light from shining.

The singer Leonard Cohen, of all people— a Jewish Buddhist, or Buddhist Jew, not really sure which, put it best in his song Anthem.

Ring the bells that still can ring

Forget your perfect offering

There is a crack, a crack in everything

That’s how the light gets in.

God finds all the red threads in all our lives, that one moment of Mother Teresa and those one moments in our lives. That is what it is to see the world transfigured.

We don’t need to look to change into Jesus’ likeness or to go from glory to glory without bearing a cross.

If you have had such a moment of seeing the world changed/ transfigured, try your best to reconnect with it. Hold it before God with gratitude and let it inflame you again. And if you can’t remember having such a moment, keep your eyes and heart open, in faith – because chances are you will.

So it is probably less so about some sort of- “Boom, you are now transfigured.” but some sort of being broken open, light shining through and then being broken open some more, seeing light in the world and bouncing it off, allowing more and more light to shine.