

Sermon 15 February 2015
2 Kings 2:1-12 Mark 9:2-9 'Pass it On'

Prayer: Open our hearts to behold your glory, O God – shining in Christ, in prophets, and saints who inspire, and perhaps even in us. Refresh our commitment to follow you even when it means we will meet injustice and oppression. May you keep us in your glory as we start listening to your story of turning to Jerusalem and the Cross in the coming weeks of our Lenten journey and share its good news. Amen.

Where were you on Wednesday night *about* 10 pm??? Did you see the 'FLASH' of light across our sky? Like most people I thought it sheet lightning but the discussion around me meant that description wasn't quite right – it didn't quite describe the 'white-ness' / brilliance... and just maybe for those of us who saw it, it was whiter than anything on earth could make????

That day for three disciples on a mountain – they saw something that was completely unexpected and 'out of this world – *for them*. – And actually I would suggest that day not far from the Jordan River Elisha saw something completely unexpected and out of this world *for him*! Chariots of fire, horses and whirlwinds are not the usual happenings around death.

Both these experiences involved people experiencing in this world, 'God's world', thin places where the Kingdom of God touches our world and we become part of it – even if it is for the smallest of seconds. Expressed as the glory of God's presence, whether it is a "shinning" or swirling fire, God is known to be present. All through the stories of our Old Testament people have witnessed this 'gloriousness' of the presence of God.

For instance, remember Daniel? In ^{*3} Daniel 10:5: "I looked up and saw a man clothed in linen...his face like lightning." And even more to the point of a match with Mark's story is that this example includes the formula "six days," and the presence of the 'Cloud' of God's presence. Exodus 24: 15: "Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud."

IN these moments, thin moments of faith, one of the strongest reactions is a drive to understand – to measure, explain, show just what is happening. Just as with our experience of the white light- it wasn't long before rational explanations were circulating – it was a meteor crossing our path. For Elisha he chose to interpret what he saw as the ancient army of Israel; for Peter he diverted into building a memorial... We fear what we don't know and are usually driven to find explanations – *but sometime*, just sometimes there aren't any. The glory of the Lord simply shines in our world, in our lives, for us to pass on. cV

What we have to pass on is a record of the experience/ of what we saw, and the other night is was a flash of light; what Peter, James and John saw, Jesus transformed before them talking to Elijah and Moses; what Elisha saw, and grieved for. **Elisha** knew in that moment his mentor was gone from him, and in his grief he tore his clothes... What we have is the witness of the great prophet Elijah **passing on** in an earthly sense and we have Elijah passing on in a teacher / mentor / leader sense. Elisha asks for and **receives** a double portion of Elijah's spirit/ God's spirit which enables him to do and be God's prophet, *like Elijah*. Elijah passes on the Spirit of God for Elisha to continue the ministry, *hear an echo*?

What Elijah, (Elisha), and Moses are known for in their stories is the ^{*1} strong political theme where Yahweh's 'prophet' is embroiled in the political and religious issues of the day. Scholars would tell us it is no surprise and if Jesus was going to need to call a ^{*3} summit meeting of 'leader's' to discuss his ministry with – it would be Elijah and Moses!

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^{*2} What ties them together are the strong, vocal stands and actions they took against the injustice of empires of their time – Roman, and Jerusalem priesthood (for Jesus), Egyptian (for Moses), and those of the corrupt kings of the northern Kingdom of Israel in the early ninth century BCE (for Elijah). This is kind of common ground is perhaps an even stronger influence because tradition suggests the mountain on which Jesus stood that day was Hermon, which overlooked the great Roman stronghold and seaport of Caesarea Philippi. A regional focal point displaying/ living in the might of the Roman Empire. cv

In Mark's Gospel **this** is the midway of Jesus ministry, it is literally the middle of Mark's Gospel. From now on Jesus turns to the cross and resurrection. So at this point in his ministry he is witnessed in a summit meeting with these two great leaders from the past. Jesus will have known what had been written about them, just as he knew the stories and legacies passed on for generation after generation. And so we can be sure that one of the things that **Mark is trying to pass on to us** is that Jesus was not alone. Not alone in his spirit, or in his fight against injustice, corruption and... And he needed to call on the spirit / spiritual presence of these two leaders as he turned and faced what was waiting down the mountain.

I find that a great legacy for us to claim as we in our turn, face what awaits us after moments of intense closeness with the Lord and our God. As we turn to face our life's ministry calling, as we realise we're at a turning point of life and must face new challenges... Not only can we take what the Lord has passed on – his teachings, life, death and resurrection **but** we have the stories and legacies from others leaders as well. I reflected on this week's news of the death of Dr Apirana Mahuika, from Ngati Porou. How much his people mourn the loss of their great leader, but they also know that they have the legacy of his life, passed on for them to draw strength for today and courage for tomorrow's battles.

We need the great influences in our lives – the leaders and mentors and teachers and guides **and we need** what they have passed on for us especially when trouble comes or difficult decisions must be made. Whether it is the influence of our Dad's, our school teacher, a University Professor, Work boss, best friend, grandma... **We need** these influences even more when injustice must be faced; corruption uncovered; the voiceless lent a voice; the sick offered healing; the thirsty given a well and even politics challenged; when the Good News of Jesus life, ministry, teachings, death & resurrection must be shared.

Because sharing the Good News of Jesus, is our ministry – passed on to us today by Mark. He wrote that immediately *after* they had this great experience of seeing the glory of God in Jesus the disciples were to keep silent – **until the Son of man had risen from the dead**. Because for Mark – Jesus was only ever fully known **after** his resurrection. It was *after* his resurrection that all could see him as the son of God, and therefore “the” Good News and therefore the Glory of God in-person **to whom we must listen**. Cv

There is what I think of as a helpful picture for us from this story of Jesus life. As Jesus was filled with the glory of God he was transformed, the heavens opened – as they did for his baptism – and this time we are told to listen! So there is an 'earth-heaven' channel of power on show. And when the event is over – Jesus tells his disciples they must go down the mountain back into ministry. There is a horizontal power flow is on display. In Mark's Gospel as he descends, Jesus is ^{*1}literally run down by a crowd concerned about what to do (if they can) for a boy. Life with its pain, suffering, questions and unknowns waits for us to take Jesus' Good and healing News into, if we listen.

^{*4} The vertical dimension, that earth-heaven channel power flow links Jesus to the divine world, a picture passed on from Moses story. We are told in this life of service and suffering we receive divine revelation such as was given to Moses on Sinai. This shows how God works. The horizontal dimension is saying: this life is the ultimate criterion of what matters in the end. The vertical exists to enable the horizontal, there is not one without the other.

So today we **receive** this picture of the cross, the glory of God shining for the world through Jesus – who then takes us down the mountain, into the world and the Good News of this, is ours to pass on. Amen.

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