

SERMON
Transfiguration of Our Lord
February 14, 2010

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm 99

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-43

Brothers and sisters in Christ, grace to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, who is the Christ. Amen.

I recently heard a story about a terrible fire at a chemical plant. Several area fire departments responded to the blaze, and quite a crowd gathered at a distance to watch. The media was hovering above in helicopters, and on the ground with remote satellite trucks.

The president of the company was among the crowd frantically watching as the fire engulfed the plant.

He gathered together the chiefs of all of the fire departments and explained to them that in the midst of the inferno was a safe that contained all of the company's super-sensitive documents.

It included the top-secret formulas for all of their best selling products. He promised to give a \$500,000 donation to the fire department that brought the blaze under control and saved all of the documents in the safe.

The chiefs rallied their firefighters and pulled out all the stops attempting to bring the blaze under control. But it wasn't happening. The fire continued to rage. But all of a sudden, the crowd heard another siren in the distance that kept growing louder and louder.

Before long, here came this old beat up, dilapidated 1930's style fire engine filled with a bunch of men in their 60's and 70's. It roared through the crowd, right past all of the other fire departments.

The truck didn't even slow down as it burst through the front door of the plant and right into the middle of the blazing inferno. Everyone – the firefighters, the media members, and the crowd gasped thinking about what these guys did.

However, before long the fire was under control and this group of aged firefighters stumbled out of the front of the plant coughing and wheezing. Everyone cheered their heroic effort. The safe with all of the important documents was intact.

A few hours later in front of the gutted plant, the president of the company handed the 82 year old chief a check for half a million dollars. In the press conference that followed, one reporter asked the chief what they planned to do with all of that money.

He didn't even hesitate. He said; "The guys already told me that they wanted to buy a new fire engine, one that has some brakes!"

In this story, something amazing happened that was totally unexpected. Who would have thought that a bunch of old guys in a seventy year old beat up fire truck would eventually be the ones to put out the fire.

All of us experience the unexpected at some point in our lives. Some of these experiences are good, and some are bad. Whoever expected that humans will someday walk on the moon? Whoever thought that the Soviet Union, along with communism in that region, would totally collapse?

Then again, whoever thought that terrorists would hijack commercial airliners and fly them into buildings?

And whoever thought that the great cathedrals in Europe would be virtually empty on Sunday mornings? And for sure, whoever thought that the Saints would win a Super Bowl!

In both our Old Testament and New Testament stories today, we read about people experiencing the unexpected. The first reading tells about Moses on Mount Sinai.

“As Moses came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin on his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him.”

The people were amazed. They experienced the unexpected. And because of that, they were forever changed.

And then in our Gospel story, we hear the story of the Transfiguration. Jesus takes Peter, John and James up on a mountain to pray. There, Jesus was “transfigured.” In other words, his appearance changed.

His face changed and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly two men appeared talking with Jesus. It was Moses and Elijah who also appeared in their glory. Then from a cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”

You see, Transfiguration Sunday is a day of transition. During the past several weeks we have been observing the Season of Epiphany. Epiphany has themes that depict Jesus as the light of the world. It culminates with Jesus being transfigured in dazzling brilliance.

This coming week is Ash Wednesday that begins another Season in the Church year. Lent is a season in which we are asked to gently put on the brakes. Something in which those old firefighters did not have in the opening story.

It is a time to slow down our pace so that we can become more aware of our relationship with Christ. It is a time to stop and listen.

No we don't have to stop working, stop cooking, stop doing laundry, stop helping our neighbor, or stop going to school. But it is a time when we can stop trying to fill every available moment with something. This is certainly advice that I need to hear also.

How many of you are like me? You're sitting in your favorite chair watching television. You take the remote and begin surfing through the channels. You begin with channel 2 and go all the way through channel 999.

Then you say to whomever else is in the room; "There's nothing on." So instead of turning the television off, you go through all of the channels again.

Why is that? Is there all of a sudden going to be some new show that appears that wasn't on five minutes ago?

Or perhaps you spend hours surfing the Internet for nothing in particular. Who knows, you might come across something interesting? Maybe you are constantly searching E-bay or Craig's List looking for good deals. Even if there is nothing you need, you feel a sense of accomplishment if you find something to spend your money on.

Or maybe you spend a significant amount of time twittering or on Facebook. There are times when I will go on Facebook and read the postings. Someone will write something like; "Just got done feeding the dog, hope she doesn't have diarrhea again." I'm thinking, "Who the heck cares about this stuff! Why waste our time?"

It's true that we can't create any more hours or minutes in the day. But we can re-arrange our lives as we journey through Lent.

A Christian writer by the name of Charles Swindoll once found himself with too many commitments in too few days. He found himself getting more and more anxious and tense about it.

“I was snapping at my wife and our children, choking down my food at mealtimes, and feeling irritated at those unexpected interruptions throughout the day,” he recalled in his book *Stress Fractures*. “Before long, things around our home started reflecting the pattern of my hurry-up life style. It was becoming unbearable.”

“I distinctly remember after supper one evening, the words of our younger daughter, Colleen. She wanted to tell me something important that had happened to her at school that day.

She began hurriedly, ‘Daddy, I wanna tell you somethin’ and I’ll tell you really fast.’ Suddenly realizing her frustration, I answered, ‘Honey, you can tell me – and you don’t have to tell me really fast. Say it slowly.’ ‘I’ll never forget her answer.’ She said; ‘then could you please listen slowly.’”

Listen slowly. It is true that we can pray at any time and anywhere, but it is also true that at times we just need to listen slowly. “Then from the cloud came a voice that said, ‘This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him! Listen to him!’”

And when we do, what will we hear? Perhaps we will hear something new – some new challenge or direction in life. Perhaps we will hear something that helps us through a stressful time in our life.

Perhaps we will hear something that gives us hope when we think that all hope is lost. Perhaps we will hear something that assures us that even though we have messed up “big time”, we can be forgiven.

Perhaps we will hear something that we already know in our hearts but just need to be reminded of now and again.

Or maybe, just maybe we will hear nothing. But in the silence, we feel the presence of our Lord holding us gently in his hands. And in knowing that, no words are necessary.

As we begin our Lenten journey, we again experience the unexpected. Jesus, the son of the living God travels a road that leads to a cross. He does this, because of his unfailing love for all humanity, including you and me.

May we always remember this as we follow in his footsteps. As we seek to be servants in the world. As we seek to love and forgive one another unconditionally. As we seek to be who God created us to be. Amen.

May the peace that passes all understanding be with you now and for life everlasting.
Amen.