

Transformation of the Vision
2 Kings 2:1-12 & Mark 9:2-9
February 14, 2021

I once lived in the town, Plainfield. I believe it was a plain with fields and farms. A person like me who grew up in a city surrounded by old mountains and a big river and not far from oceans, the geography of plainfield was hard. People are different. Some people are fascinated with a big open field. But I need mountains, rivers, and oceans. I have longings or anticipations that something different or exciting happens at mountains, oceans, lakes, or rivers. In today's Old Testament reading we see that prophets Elijah and Elisha are standing at the Jordan River. When you hear the word river, what comes to your mind? And when you hear 'the Jordan River' what do you think and feel? I feel an anticipation that something is going to happen but until we have eyes to see beyond our physical vision, we don't see what's really going on. About 20 years ago, I saw the Jordan River. It was a narrow murky water, nothing amazing or special. That's what I saw with my physical eyes but what have happened at the Jordan River in the Bible was totally different. To understand those Biblical stories, we need a different vision.

At the last-minute right before when the Lord took Elijah to heaven who was the most beloved prophet of Israel, his disciple Elisha was standing at the river with him. Both of them had the feeling of anticipation that something was going to happen. Elijah kept telling Elisha to stay there where he was, but Elisha kept saying "No, I don't leave you. I follow you." When we have a longing for something or someone, we cannot stay there where we are. We keep pushing, moving, and following until we see and participate in what's going on. Elisha kept following Elijah to see what God was going to do with his teacher. Elijah hit the Jordan River with his coat and divided it in two and they crossed the river. When they got the other side of the river the chariot of God in a fire and smoke came down and took Elijah to heaven. People who remained the other side of river didn't see it, but Elisha saw it. His vision was transformed; he saw what God was doing; and he inherited the double portion of the spirit and the power of his teacher, Elijah. I don't know how to explain the transformation of vision happens physically, or spiritually. But I want to say that until we have a burning desire or longing, like a fire in our hearts, we don't see what God is doing. God is not a magician who serves our passive curiosity, but the creator who recreates our vision to see God's wondrous works when we eager to participate in them.

The transformation of vision happens again this time on a mountain top in today's Gospel reading. This time the teacher is Jesus, and the disciples are Peter, James, and John. It is after Jesus told his disciples about his coming sufferings and they needed to take up their own crosses. Jesus anticipated what God was going to do. As Elijah took Elisha to the other side of river, Jesus took his disciples to a mountain top where no one was around, and no one saw them. Elijah was taken to heaven before Elisha's eyes, but Jesus was transfigured before his disciples' eyes. His clothes turned to amazingly bright white, and his face shone. Disciples knew

it was Jesus, but he was transfigured into someone whom only God knew. God revealed Jesus' true identity before his disciples' eyes. Now they saw what God was doing in Jesus and through Jesus.

About one week ago after we had big snow fall, I went to see Lake Michigan at Gilson Park beach. When I parked my car and got out of it, I was shocked to see what was happening in front of my eyes. There was no sand beach, water, waves, or seagulls that I knew as Lake Michigan. The lake was transformed into a quiet and amazingly bright white snow field. I felt it was like Jesus' clothe on the mountain top when he was transfigured. The Sun shone upon the white snow field and it was like God's glory shining. I felt like my vision was transformed to see something new that God was doing. God recreates his creation continually, and, also, God recreates our vision to see God's wonderous works. I was amazed and filled with joy and delight.

On the mountain top Jesus' disciples were amazed and filled with joy and delight seeing transfigured Jesus. Peter said to Jesus that it was good to be there and he wanted to make three tents and stay there. He was babbling without knowing what to speak. Then, a voice telling them, "This is my Son, the beloved. Listen to him!" It was the same voice at Jesus' baptism telling him, "You are my Son, the beloved; with you I am well pleased." People talked about Jesus in many ways without knowing who he was. Some people liked him, and some people hated him. Some people called him one of prophets and others called him a law-breaking blasphemy teacher. Jesus' identity was hidden from their plain vision. That's why after his transfiguration Jesus ordered his disciples not to tell anyone what they had seen until his resurrection. Transfigured Jesus on the mountain top was Jesus who will be in his resurrection and glory. His true identity was in his resurrection and he lived by that identity in his earthly life though it was hidden from people's plain vision.

What's your vision of resurrection? Our true identity is in our vision of resurrection. Once I told a group of pastors that my vision of resurrection is uniting the light of God and glorified in it. I am a meager human being who is a sinner. But I believe I will be glorified in resurrection. One of pastors there told me he didn't believe we would be melting away in one great light. He said his vision of resurrection is a great company of people surrounding God. He believed we would live as individuals, even after death and resurrection. We laughed together that his vision is more like Western individualism and my vision is more like Eastern great oneness, but both visions are in the Bible. How about you? Israelites still believe that Elijah was not dead but lifted up to heaven without death. Christians believe Jesus was risen from death and ascended to heaven and we will be like him.

Our identity is in resurrection not in what we do here to make a living and we live this life by that transformed vision. When we have that transformed vision, we are amazed and filled with joy, awe, and delight. We celebrate life here and there. Before Ash Wednesday we have Mardi Gras celebration with parade, food, music, and dance. It's a carnival. Customs, beads, and

masks allow us to set aside our everyday plainness and individuality and experience a heightened sense of creativity and community. It is a creative way of celebrating life when we start to prepare Lenten season. As Paul says in the book of Romans when we live, we live for the Lord and when we die, we die for the Lord. And the Lord will resurrect us into glory. We will be transfigured like Jesus in our resurrection. Let's be amazed by, and joyful and delightful for who we are and what God is doing for us and in us through Jesus. Let us now celebrate our life in God with special music.