

# **1“Lord, Please Let Us Stay”**

**February 22, 2009 – Transfiguration of Our Lord**

**Rev. Paul Johns**

Mark 9:2-9

Four weeks ago we had a Church Council Retreat. In preparation for that Pastor Mike gave us this question to ponder, “What kind of worship service would make you eager to attend – that you would regret missing?”

In our Transfiguration Sunday Gospel text for this morning Peter says, “Lord, it is really great to be here. I don’t ever want to leave.”

Why did Peter want to stay? In terms of glorious appearance this was the Number One day in the life of Jesus. Our text says, “His clothes became dazzling white.”

I had one of the most interesting experiences in preparing the sermon this morning. In the Matthew account, a brief word study is done on the word “cloud.” It was done by George Mendenhall who was my professor at the University of Michigan and with whom I stayed in Jerusalem at the American School of Oriental Research. His main point was that a cloud had to overshadow the glory of God or we would not be able to stand it. God has glory that we cannot even imagine.

When I saw Sandy Reback in the hospital I rode the elevator for two stories. In that brief time a woman five times used expressions like, “O God, this elevator really moves,” or “O God, did you really say that to her.” Dr. Mendenhall would not make a big deal out of that but he would say, “It is no accident that the Lord’s Prayer begins, “Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name.”

Peter wanted to stay because he had the fabulous experience of seeing Jesus in his Godly glory. Secondly, Jesus was with Moses.

Moses is known as the vehicle of God for giving the Law. But it was not, “Let’s give a law to make people feel miserable.” It was, “Let’s give a law so that people can have the best kind of life.”

It was, however, also a law to drive people to the forgiveness and life in God. Moses is at the burning bush. Moses sensed it was holy ground and he cries out, “O God, who are you.” “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Ah, but that is a problem. Why? Because Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have been dead for 400 years. Yes, says God, and I am the God not of the dead, but of the living. Which is another way of saying the Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive in heaven.

Jesus, by the way, used this story to try to convince the Sadducees that there was life after death. And Peter, James, and John were seeing these things and saying, “Lord, this is great. Let us stay here in this church, in this tabernacle.” Jesus with the glory of God. Secondly, Jesus as the new Moses with law, love, and life. And now thirdly, Jesus as the new Elijah.

It was at Mt. Carmel. Elijah thunders out this challenge. How long do you go limping between two sides? Baal be god, then serve him. If the Lord be God, then serve him. But you can’t have it both ways. A choice must be made.

Haifa is a large Israeli city near Mt. Carmel. A priest serving the area was Father Daniel. He was Polish and born Jewish. But in the killing of Jews, he was rescued by a Catholic family and became a priest. But the Israeli government said, “No, you can’t be a Catholic Priest and also be a Jew. Father Daniel said, “I agree, but then the 70% of the population who are atheists also cannot be Jews.

The point is this. Elijah said, “Make a choice. Father Daniel said, “make a choice.” The most happy persons, satisfied persons are not those who go wandering between two sides. As the people of Israel were in the new land, Joshua said, “Choose whom you will serve.” And the disciples on Transfiguration Sunday looked around and there was Jesus only. That’s the choice – Jesus Only. Amen.