

Transfiguration 2021, February 14, 2021

2 Kings 2:1-12, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6, Mark 9:2-9, Psalm 50:1-6

We're about to hear some of the wildest readings of the year. Only the Book of Revelation might rival these, but the Book of Revelation's is clearly a recounting of a vision or dream. These readings are presented to us as a fact of real-life events and for those with logical rational minds, they can be a bit hard to swallow.

The 1st one is about one of my favorite Old Testament people – the greatest of all the prophets, Elijah. He's an amazing man with his magical staff and his flowing cloak, performing incredible miracles. I love the life of Elijah. He's like Merlin or Gandalf, or Albus Dumbledore. I can engage my willing suspension of disbelief in the miraculous events of his life because some part of me accepts that stories of Elijah's life have come from ancient times, thousands of years ago and were carried on through time through Oral tradition and great story-telling long before they were written down. But Elijah also has a dark side, I don't always like or agree with. He's a bit quick to call down fire and violence in the name of God, causing whole cities and armies to be slaughtered in the name of God.

But then I have to remember Elijah was only human. We all have some dark part of ourselves that craves the divine power to come down and smite our enemies, the people who dare to disagree with us. Despite his very human flaws, we'll hear how Elijah was spared from death by being taxied away by the proverbial Chariot of Fire.

I love the story, I'm just not always sure how factual it actually was, much like the famous Apotheosis of George Washington depicted in the fresco inside the Dome of the Capital building in DC.

Yet, with Elijah I still maintain a certain willing suspension of disbelief because I know very well that God sometimes does weird things I simply can't explain or even understand with my very human limited brain.

As if that wasn't enough though, we're then going to hear a more contemporary recounting of a weird event in Jesus' life.

Six mere days after Jesus dropped the bombshell news of his upcoming death and crucifixion, news St. Peter didn't take well getting it wrong as Peter always does, saying "Lord, forbid it! We'll never let them kill you, you're God! And remember

Jesus snapped at Peter trying to spare his friend getting crucified and Jesus snapping “Get behind me Satan!” because Jesus knew there can be no Glorious Resurrection without the suffering of the crucifixion.

So, to get back to our story, six days after Jesus announced his execution, he took Peter, James and John up a high mountain for the wildest mountain top experience of their lives. I don’t know if they were all suffering some major oxygen deprivation or snacking on some mountain growth psilocybin, but something really weird happened.

All of a sudden, they see Jesus glowing impossibly bright and having a conversation with Elijah and Moses, the great pillars of the Old Testament, men who had been dead for nearly a thousand years.

Now, I’m willing to go again into my special “willing suspension of disbelief” mode again because I’m still certain that our mysterious God and Creator does a lot of things I can’t understand or comprehend.

“There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio”.

So, what is the point of this story we should ask rather than get distracted by all the psychedelic particulars.

Moses the giver of the law with his 10 Commandments and Elijah the greatest of the Old Testament Prophets standing and consulting with Jesus the Giver of the New Commandment of non-violence and the way of love.

Moses taught us a law of equality and fairness that if you poke out my eye then you should have your eye removed as both a deterrent and a system of fair justice. Elijah taught us not to get in God’s way or risk calling down fire and destruction if you ignore God’s will. Jesus, God incarnate, taught the opposite of both of them. He said “Don’t do an eye for an eye, turn the other cheek. And Jesus refused the power to call down fire from heaven even when his own Apostles the Sons of Thunder wanted him to, telling them they would have to suffer as well to reach glory.

As always, we’ll hear dear St. Peter get it wrong yet again. Peter is going to freak out and blurt out “It’s great to see Moses and Elijah and Jesus. Let’s build three

equal shrines on this mountain top. Let's lock this incredible event down with buildings."

But our mysterious God is going to say 'No'. Moses, Elijah, and Jesus aren't a triumvirate of Equals. A cloud is going to cover them all and God's voice is going to set the record straight: "Not Moses, Not Elijah, but Jesus is my son, my beloved, Listen to HIM!:

No more violence in my name. No more Eye for an eye. Listen to what Jesus says, no one else.

My disbelief in all the supernatural magic can easily and willingly be set aside because the deeper message of non-violence is far more important, even if we suffer, even if we are abused or have our eyes plucked out, or if we get nailed to a tree, we will listen to Jesus and not retaliate, we will stop the chain of violence in an eye for an eye, because we see the Glory behind the crucifixion. We see the joy which is always bigger than our suffering. Jesus is not equal to Elijah and Moses. Jesus is God, the God who created Moses and Elijah. He is the God who we crucified nailed on a tree and never called down fire upon us, who never did an eye for an eye.

So, let us truly listen to him and remember the Glory that awaits us after the low valley of Lent. Let us remember the Glory waiting for us at Easter.