

Now I see it – now I don't

2 Kings 2:1-12; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9

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The whole season from Christmas Day to today is about light. It starts with seeing a distant light in the sky. In each reading, there is little glimmer. The scripture talks about light and darkness, again and again. It comes closer and closer. There will be just an image or word, here and there, dropped like breadcrumbs to bring you to the top of this mountain to witness the Transfiguration. This is the moment, the neon sign, the in-your-face, declaration that Jesus IS the light in the world. It is here now.

In ancient Christian tradition, this path was marked more obviously with rituals. For example, to mark Mary's presentation of Jesus to the temple, churches celebrated Candlemas. People would bring candles to the church to be blessed and take them home to burn on the sabbath through the year. Lutheran churches sometimes have an evening celebration where the congregation lights their candles and takes them out into the night – physically bringing light into the snow-filled world.

Although sometimes the meaning of the Gospels may seem obscure, there is no getting around the clarity of what James, Peter and John saw on the mountain. Or at least, claimed to see on the mountain as it disappeared right before their eyes. There is no photograph and they didn't get to build the houses for Elijah and Moses; No rock monument or statue – just a booming voice and phut, the vision was gone.

So, I want you to take away 4 points from today's reading.

1. Note, this is another time where Jesus leaves the crowds and seeks a quiet space to be close to God. This time he takes Peter, James and John, perhaps to model why time-out is so important. He goes to a quiet place – away from people. Jesus restores himself by bathing in the presence of God. You can do the same...
2. And if you do, the veil might be lifted, even for a moment. There are times and places that are thin places – where the light of God, where understanding erupts– where the neon sign goes off – and the answer is obvious. You get your epiphany.
3. BUT, and as always a big BUT, you cannot expect it to last forever. It is a brief moment, a gift like the touch of wind on your cheek – and no one else will experience it. It is up to you to treasure it and fan the flame. Veils are lifted but soon the fog rolls in.

It is what you do with it that counts. Don't build an edifice – take the light into the world.

I'm going to stop there and give you a little exercise and the great sermonising resume...shortly. (paperchain)

4. Why do you think Elijah and Moses were in conversation with Jesus?

Stop for comments

Mark goes to great lengths to show Jesus didn't just pop up out of nowhere, Isaiah predicted a messenger. The OT reading shows Elijah passing his responsibilities to Elisha who feels ill-equipped but carries on. John the Baptist goes before Jesus proclaiming someone greater than him will come – each is a link in the chain. Each character is an anchor that not just points in a direction but also keeps Jesus (and us) connected. He stands on the shoulders of ancestors and wise men. That is what grounds him in the human experience. When He needs rest and renewal – He spends his time with God and then returns to the people.

While our thoughts may turn heavenwards – and we may have those divine moments – we too, need to be grounded or it becomes its own obsession.¹ Look around you to this community. They are your tether, in a good way. You are in a wisdom chain. You are linked: to the past, the present and each other.

It is to remind us that our work is on earth. That you are no more alone than Jesus was and that all of us bear the gifts and scars of our ancestors. You are part of their chain.

Let us complete that chain...

Invite Rosemary to join her link to mine and I will close the loop.

Although a chain may be strong, it is made of frail links. What better metaphor for community?

So I pray

Precious Lord, the same God my ancestors worshipped, thank you for the connections that stretch back through the veils of time and forward to your kingdom on earth. Thank you for the links that make us one. Amen

There are times when I see mist
veil the valleys
and I know that God lies behind.
I feel just as blessed
to have seen the veil
as the unnamed woman touched his robe.

¹ In my experience with extremely ill mental health patients, religious fixations and hallucinations are not unusual. They have lost their earthly connections.

