

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

Grace and peace to you from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

You folks might remember a couple of weeks ago, there at the end of January, when it was so frigid cold. We had those upper Midwestern temperatures. What you don't know is that I keep in my car, a ready supply of God's gift to humanity: Mountain Dew. Especially in the wintertime, it's so nice to go out there, open the back door, pull out a bottle, climb into the driver's seat, open up my bottle and drive off to work. Except one particular morning as I sat down and cracked open my bottle, an interesting thing happened. I always check before opening them that they haven't frozen or that they haven't burst or anything, everything appeared to be all right, all nice and liquid the way it was supposed to be. But when I opened it up, this really weird thing happened and I watched as it did this.

All of a sudden, my Mountain Dew turned to slush. It was so cold. I called my father-in-law, yesterday, who is a retired high school chemistry teacher. Unfortunately he was not home, so I don't know the exact chemical reason of why it did that, but I have a feeling it had something to do with the carbonation coming up and those bubbles popping and somehow really chilling the rest. But, I got to drive to work with my own little "slushy in a bottle." My wonderful morning beverage that gets me going had turned from liquid to a semisolid. It was, one could say, transformed, there right before my eyes. It went from one state of being into another. Kind of like what is happening in our lessons today.

In our first lesson from 2 Kings, Elijah is the most esteemed prophet in all of the combined kingdom of Judah & Israel. He has been around awhile; people love him; people respect him; people hate him; but he is well known. Most of the kings fear him. He, however, is getting ready to move on. The Lord God Almighty already gave him a successor back in 1 Kings, chapter 19, when he was hiding out from Ahab and Jezebel. In 1 Kings, Chapter 18, this is where he had his whole smack down with the 450 prophets of Baal. But in Chapter 19, Elijah is hiding out from King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, and he is doing his whiny thing. He is saying to God 'I'm the last one here and no one else loves you Lord.' God says to Elijah, 'Just shut up. You are so off base here.' God starts listing all these other people who are faithful, among whom listed Elisha. So Elijah goes and gets Elisha, and Elisha becomes his apprentice and eventually is going to follow Elijah as prophet to Judah & Israel.

So now Elijah knows his time is up and Elisha knows his boss's time is up, and even if Elijah didn't know that he is reminded of it as they walk along. The people keep walking up to them and saying, 'you know that Elijah is about to leave, don't you?' And Elisha says, 'yes, just go away.' So finally they get to Elijah's last earthly spot, and we have that wonderful story of Elijah being scooped up in this fiery chariot and just being taken right up to heaven.

(Here's the Bible Trivia question for the day: There are only two people in the Bible who have never died. Elijah is the second one. Who can tell me who the other person is? My bottle of

Mountain Dew to the first person to tell me. I'll see you after worship.) So, Elijah is brought up into heaven. But the story is about more than just being taken up into heaven. It is about more than simply not dying. Our story is about being transformed, being remade, changed, even transfigured. Which is what leads us to the Gospel lesson.

Here in our Gospel lesson, Jesus has taken his three trusted guys, Peter, James & John, with him. He is going off like he does so many times in Mark. He goes off to be by himself, usually to pray. Usually it is in the wilderness, lots of time it is on the mountain top. He is going somewhere, it is a mountain, but we don't know which mountain and we don't know where the mountain is. But we do know for certain that when Jesus and His three guys reach the top of the mountain, Steven Spielberg steps in, Industrial Lights & Magic takes over, and the special effects kick in. Jesus is back lit. He suddenly is dazzling white, like any Clorox Bleach commercial would love to have, and Peter, true to his duffus self says, "Rabbi, Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings. One for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

This moment, for Peter, is like, for a Republican, if Ronald Reagan and Charlton Heston were to suddenly show up in your living room; or from a Democrat point of view, if Jack & Bobby Kennedy were – POOF, in your family room. O.K., so maybe you might be a little dumb struck if that were to happen to you, for all kinds of reasons. So maybe I shouldn't be too harsh on Peter, but then he does do this over and over again (and then a few times after that).

Peter is running off at the mouth, in part because he doesn't know what to say, and he also has this very bad habit of speaking before he engages his brain. But, I'm pretty certain that what is going through Peter's mind is "OH (fill in the blank expletive), it really **is** Moses and Elijah right here." He doesn't know what to say, he doesn't know what to do, and so this "Oh, let's build three booths for you guys," kind of just blurts out of his mouth. Until (and here comes the special effects again) the clouds roll in, everybody is shrouded in mist, and then The Voice (and I don't mean Charlton Heston) says, no, **COMMANDS** them, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!"

We don't quite get the implication in English, but the Greek word there is, ah-ku-ah-te, is an imperative; it's a command. And more important, it is in the tense that implies, Ongoing Action. Listen to him **NOW**, and keep listening to what he says. You don't mess around with the Voice, especially when the voice is giving a command. He has been changed, transformed, transfigured.

Which perhaps is easy for us to understand when it comes to talking about Jesus. And, maybe it's even easy to comprehend when we're talking about the number one prophet in all of the history of Israel. But what about when it comes to Peter? Or you? Or me? Do you ever think of yourself as being changed, or transformed, or transfigured? Because, and here's the kicker, you were. You probably don't remember it, especially if you've been one of those "life-long Lutherans." But you were. When those waters of your baptism were poured over your head, you were changed, transformed, and maybe even transfigured.

O.K., maybe you didn't get the Spielberg option. But like my nearly frozen Mountain Dew, that changed from liquid to slush in a matter of moments, we too, at our baptism went from sinful to being cleansed, from being alone to having a new family in Christ. We weren't given a promise

that we were going to be perfect. We weren't given a promise that all our problems would go away, that we would never be sick, that we would always have enough money. We were promised that in everything that happens to us, God would be with us. In that instant, in that baptism, we were changed. In that baptism we were transformed. As we keep in the command that God gave there on the mountain top to Peter - Remember it's an ongoing action, so it was just as pertinent when God said it to Peter, as it is today, over 2000 years ago, to listen when God speaks.

We are called to be in that transfigured relationship. That we walk together in that new light that is Christ. Which is better than any fiery chariot or mountain top can ever be.

Amen.