



BIBLE FAITH SHARING, MARCH 1, 2023
SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT (CA)

Genesis 12:1-4a

The LORD said to Abram: "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you." Abram went as the LORD directed him.

Reflection:

*Often when I am talking with someone in jail, they tell me that it was God who put them there. They claim to have overdosed on drugs and if not for being arrested and put in jail, they would be dead. There are a few problems with this belief. One is, God does not put people in jail to save them. There are much better ways to be saved from the destructive forces of drugs than jail. Secondly, being in jail doesn't exactly make someone want to stay sober, so they normally go straight to using again very soon after release. God does not control our lives this way and can only help people by allowing them the freedom to help themselves. God is more concerned about saving our soul rather than our body. **If we don't want to seek the proper help to change, we are like the walking dead, alive on the outside, but dead on the inside. In today's first reading, God invites Abram on an adventures journey. It is 1800 B.C. when God invites Abram to leave the only home he knew and travel very far away, over difficult terrain, to a foreign land. God had a plan for Abram as he does for all of us. Abram had no idea what God's plan for him was nor did he know the place God was leading him. Where God was leading him was not important, it was the journey that mattered. He simply trusted and accepted God's invitation. So it is with us. God invites each of us on a journey, a journey inward, to our heart and soul. A journey that calls us to accept God's invitation and trust in his guidance. Like Abram, we may not know where that journey will take us, but we can rest assured God will not lead us to a place like jail, but rather a place that we will be given the freedom to fulfill the plan he has for us.***



Thought I knew where I was going too.

He said God told him to go this way.

Responsorial Psalm 33:4-5,18-20,22

R. (22) Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.
Upright is the word of the LORD, and all his works are trustworthy.
He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.
R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.
See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness, To deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine.
R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.
Our soul waits for the LORD, who is our help and our shield.
May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us who have put our hope in you.
R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Questions:

1. Any words in the reading get your attention? Any feelings? Thoughts? Images? Questions?
2. Have you ever gone on a trip to a place not familiar to you and not knowing what to expect? What was it like for you?
3. Have you ever moved to a different location you knew little to nothing about? What was it like?
4. What is the difference between an inward journey and an outward journey?
5. What do you say to God inviting you on a journey to fulfill the plan he has for you?

2 Timothy 1:8b-10

Beloved: Bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God. He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began, but now made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Reflection:

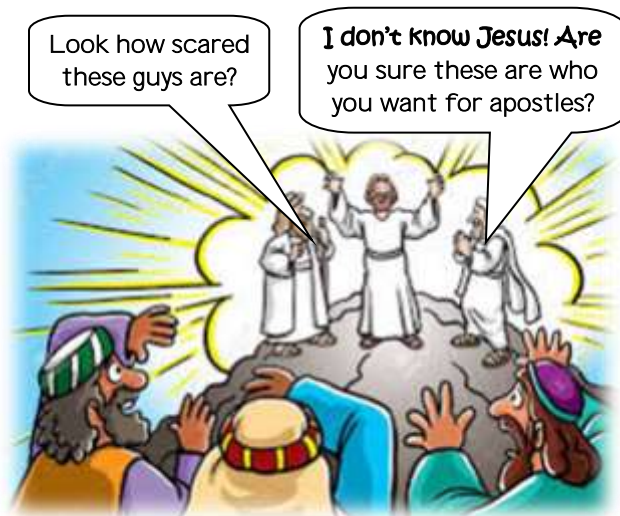
Choosing to endure some hardship in life is often due to something we feel is worth the struggle, or perhaps our need for survival. With all the technology we have today, much can be done by simply pushing a button rather than getting up and go do it ourselves. In our modern times, many things do not take much if any effort at all. St. Paul's letter to his companion Timothy, encourages the Christian community to endure whatever sufferings necessary to live out the Gospel message of Jesus. Christians were being persecuted, many choosing to suffer horrible deaths and touter rather than denounce their faith in Jesus. Paul, writing from prison, where he was eventually executed, knows all too well what it means to endure hardship for the Gospel. He also knows that whatever suffering and hardship we must endure for the sake of the Gospel, is worth it. If we stay close to God, he will give us the strength to endure times when people want to hurt us or put us down for our belief in the Gospel. Notice Paul, modeling the way of Jesus, does not allow himself to be a victim by seeking revenge for his enemies, nor does he encourage us to do so either. Rather he encourages us to stay focused on the only one who can save the world and bring us with him into eternal life. Nothing can be worth more.

Questions:

1. Any words in the reading get your attention? Any feelings? Thoughts? Images? Questions?
2. Share about something that is a hardship you accepted to do. What makes enduring the hardship worth it?
3. What made Paul able to endure his hardships, to the point of being put in prison and executed?
4. What is your faith in God worth to you? How far would you be willing to go?

Gospel of Matthew 17:1-9

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid." And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, "Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."



Reflection:

Today's Gospel reading is known as the "Transfiguration". Meaning, to be transformed in image or appearance. However, the transfiguration of Jesus represents something much deeper than a change in appearance only. Jesus took three of his apostles up a mountain to pray, when a cloud overshadowed them. In the Bible, a mountain represents a place where God reveals something to humanity, like when Moses went up to the top of Mount Sinai covered by a cloud and received Gods 10 Commandments. From the cloud in today's reading, God reveals who Jesus truly is, someone from heaven, sent to fulfill God's plan for our salvation, by dying on the cross for the sins of all humanity.

This was confirmed by the two other heavenly figures who had long since passed away and appeared next to Jesus having a conversation with him. Moses represents Jewish Law given by God to the Israelites, and Elijah represents all the prophets of Israel. Coming down from heaven and meeting with Jesus confirmed the fulfillment of both Jewish Law and what all the prophets foretold of a savior in Jesus.

God the father speaks from the cloud, telling the apostles to "listen" to his son Jesus. But what is it God wants them to listen to Jesus about? Something completely shocking, overwhelming, and frightening, they did not want to hear – that he would be betrayed, tortured, and be executed on the cross! Gods' kingdom will not be like the worlds kingdoms who rely on selfishness, violence, and conquest, but rather on giving, serving, kindness, and mercy. The transformation of Jesus is our transformation if we too would, "listen to him".

Questions:

1. Any words in the reading get your attention? Any feelings? Thoughts? Images? Questions?
2. Share a time when someone told you something that was just too hard to accept.
3. What did God want the apostles to listen to, from Jesus?
4. If your life were to be transformed, what would it look like for you? What needs transforming in your life right now?