

Thursday, March 23, 2023
Season of Lent
Day 26

Matthew 17:1–13

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

⁴ Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” ⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

¹⁰ The disciples asked him, “Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

¹¹ Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. ¹² But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” ¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

Reflection

Can we miss when God acts? In the book, *Till We Have Faces*, Lewis depicts a scene where one sister knows herself to be married to a god and to dwell in his beautiful house. The other sister is blind to all this. She initially cannot see the house at all, and when she does it disappears. She is unsure who her sister is living with, but she decides it must, in fact, either be a monster or a brigand. Under the guise of saving her sister she arranges for a light to reveal the face of her sister’s lover, against his wishes and express instruction. In that act, Psyche’s joy is turned to sorrow. Yes, we can totally miss it when God acts. We do it every day.

At the moment when Jesus’s glory is revealed we are also told that his own people will miss this moment of God’s action. Just as John the Baptist was not recognized in his capacity of Elijah, so the people will not recognize the coming of their true king. Both will taste death. We cannot stand on this side of the event and claim that we would know and do better if we were there. The truth is, our human sinful condition creates a perpetual blindspot when it comes to God’s actions.

The good news is, God takes our blindness and betrayal into account as he launches his rescue plan. The very act of blind betrayal and rejection is the means of our redemption. The command coming from the cloud is not to see clearly, but to listen to God’s beloved Son. He alone reveals God to us. He alone can transform our betrayal and sin into a means of salvation and new life. Thanks be to God!

Prayer

Lord, let us hear your voice alone. Receive our humble efforts and even our blind rebellion, and save us from our sin and ourselves. Amen.