



Lent 2

# THE NEW SHOFAR

Disciples of Christ share the cross with their Saviour

Genesis 22:1-18 - Mark 9:2-10

February 25<sup>th</sup>

Repent! Believe the Good News!

*Six days later* is an odd period of time but it does make one ponder whether or not Mark had in mind the six days of creation. In Jewish thought the seventh day marked the climactic close to God's creative works, the point towards which the creative works had been moving. Jewish literature offers the idea that after climatic seventh day something spectacular would take place. If this is what Mark had in mind, the transfiguration most surely was that climactic moment.

***Jesus marks the opening of a whole new era in creation history. What is new about it? How has his life and ministry changed my/our own life?***

***Mark has the death of Jesus as the high point of his Gospel. How can he present such a savage execution as a moment of victory? What does this tell me about my own life and the existence of evils in today's world?***

However, the climactic moment has already been unfolding all around them, with only their spiritual blindness and religious narrowness hindering their ability to appreciate the new reality. While the great saving moment of Mark's Gospel will be the death of Jesus on Golgotha, that moment was already transforming creation. Jesus, at his baptism, indicated what was needed for them to appreciate the importance of what was happening in creation - *repent, and believe in the good news*. This "Good

News" is not the written Gospel but all God is doing for creation in and through the person and ministry of Jesus his Son. Through his words and powerful acts, Jesus takes away pain, forgives sins and transforms the whole of human life.

## ***Even in apparent defeat God is victorious***

Mark's Gospel is rich with the idea of there being a history to the saving works of God, a history visible in the story of Israel. What we see in Jesus is a continuing of the divine activities of the past, a divine mission and ministry to be shared with the faith community of the Church in its empowered at Pentecost. This is a challenging idea – the loving and saving hand of God can be discovered in all the events of human, a truth visible through the eyes of faith, and most particularly in Israel's story. Thus, a key to understanding the meaning of the transfiguration is: *And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus*. These two men appearing with Jesus are two of the most significant in the Old Testament.

These two are also important characters in the eschatological expectations of Israel. There was speculation that both would be involved in the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. And here they are! The prophet Malachi is particularly important here: *See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes...and...I will send*

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*my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.* We know too how some of the Jews had wondered if Jesus was this anticipated Elijah, that Elijah had in fact come back in the person of Jesus.

There are examples in Jewish traditions where both Moses and Elijah appear together in the eschaton – *The End time* – and having them together here with Jesus is a way of saying that this long-awaited End Time has now begun in the person and ministry of this man Jesus. They are characters that are in the story to provide a continuity with the works of God in the Old Testament. What God had begun in Abraham was being fulfilled and brought to a conclusion in Jesus the Son of God. These two men play no further role in the ministry of Jesus. They disappear and in so doing leave the new time to its new Prophet – Jesus. After the transfiguration, they will fade away and disappear leaving Jesus to be alone by himself. He is the one who will now accomplish all that Elijah and Moses had been a part of beginning. He is the high point of divine revelation.

**Mark stresses the importance of “listening” to Jesus. God commanded all followers to “listen”. What does listening look like? How do we do it? As an individual? As faith communities? How does Lent assist in the obeying of this divine command? Last time I heard God speaking to me, what did I hear?**

### ***Listen to what God is saying - its important***

The next significant moment in the transfiguration is: *and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud.* At his baptism, the voice from heaven was addressed to Jesus and was meant as an affirmation for him. Here, it is about teaching, informing, directing and encouraging the disciples. They are the ones who need the courage demanded in taking up their crosses and following Jesus. The voice also confirms the statement of faith made by Peter in 8:29...*you are the Christ...the anointed...the messiah...*

It is likely the use of the word *beloved* is meant to bring in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his own son in order to participate in the saving activities of God. In the context here, we heard prior to this narrative the necessity of Jesus going to his sacrificial death. God is willing to allow his Son to be crucified for the sake of the children he loves. It is all about salvation, liberation for those who are in any kind of darkness.

At his baptism God announced to Jesus *I am pleased with you.* Here in our present narrative, God addresses the disciples and tells them to *listen to him.* As we already know from Mark, *to listen* means much more than just paying attention to the words spoken by Jesus. It includes the necessity of acting out what is heard, making Jesus the foundation and the model for their lives. This listening would also include, or perhaps especially include, the difficult and challenging teachings about the necessity of the Son of Man going to his death and the consequential necessity for disciples to carry their own crosses.

**Lent:** *Mark makes it clear how genuine discipleship is never easy. If it is unchallenging, non-life transforming, then it may not be discipleship. How are our own Lenten disciplines advancing? In what ways are we seeking the Spirit’s guidance in growing in Christ? What actual steps are we taking? What more could we be doing? Is it worth the effort? Why?*

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