

LENT 2 – 2022  
Gen 15:5-12;17-18  
Phil 3:17-4:1  
Lk 9:28-36

Wouldn't our Christian lives be much simpler if God just told us what he expects of us both as individuals and as a Church. However, if he did, would we believe him and do it?

Abram had this problem. God had promised that his descendants would become a great nation, but he and his wife Sarah were old and they did not have an heir. Abram doubted, so in a dream God told him to set up two lines of animal and bird carcasses. This was how agreements were made at that time. The two parties faced each other and sat between the lines of carcasses until they reached an agreement. The carcasses were a reminder that whoever broke the agreement would end up like the carcasses. In Abram's dream a smoking fire pot, which was a sign of God's presence, passed between the carcasses, so affirming that God would honour his promise.

The gospel reading is making the point that since the birth of Jesus, God no longer needs to communicate through angels or prophets. Instead he tells us that Jesus is, "My Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him." Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God who has come to bear witness to the Truth. The experience on the Mount of Transfiguration with the appearance of Moses and Elijah gave Peter, James and John a glimpse of heaven, a vision of eternity where past, present and future are brought together. The Old and the New Covenants, the living and the dead, the suffering and the glory, the beginning and the end gathered in one place.

Up to this point in St Luke's gospel, Jesus is seen as a Spirit empowered conqueror of evil. From the Transfiguration on he is portrayed as one who is subject to human limitations. He is no longer the subject of the action but is the object of other people's actions, and while still empowered by the Spirit, his ministry is characterised by rejection, persecution, suffering and finally death, so that the victory over sin and evil can be won.

Rejection and persecution shatters the false idols and securities that we hold on to and enables God to draw us to himself. Obedience to God in the face of suffering enables God to live within us, and so our suffering becomes the pain that heals and purifies.

When Jesus came down from the mountain he began his journey to Jerusalem. This was the Way of the Cross and it is this way on which he expects his disciples to travel. "Take up your Cross and follow me" is no slick political slogan. Condemned prisoners carried part of the cross on which they would die. They had been stripped of all worldly security and all worldly attachments had been severed. There was no worldly future for them. Only attachment to God remained.

Jesus calls on us to live this life of detachment daily. To deny oneself does not mean destroying our individuality, but it does mean that we must deny that we are God and stop

living as if we are in control of our own lives, if not of the world. We have to let go of self-worship in order to achieve a right relationship with God.

It was the unwillingness of some Christians in Philippi to do this that made St Paul angry. They claimed to be faithful disciples but still lived as addicts to what the world offered. They were selective about what they believed and practiced. Some Catholics still are.

Lent is our journey that leads to the Entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, Gethsemane , Calvary and the Resurrection. “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.” said Jesus. It is the journey of letting go of who and what we are in order to become what we can be and fully united with God.

TS Eliot in his Quartet *East Coker* describes our journey to righteousness in this way –

“To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,  
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.  
In order to arrive at what you do not know  
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.  
In order to possess what you do not possess  
You must go by the way of dispossession.  
In order to arrive at what you are not  
You must go through the way in which you are not.  
And what you do not know is the only thing you know  
And what you own is what you do not own  
And where you are is where you are not.”

*East Coker III*

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