

2nd SUNDAY OF LENT (Cycle A)
February 17, 2008 -- Deacon Bill Nourse, Ed.D.

INTRODUCTION

One of the things that's often struck me about the Old Testament is the way God chooses certain times, and certain places, and certain people, to intervene in human history. Sometimes we see Him choose one single person to save the human race from almost certain destruction. We can see many times in Scripture when the actions of just a few people – sometimes the actions of just one person – have made all the difference in the history of the human race.

The human race had been around for a long time before God called Abram. Adam and Eve and their children and grandchildren had lived and died. Noah and his family had been saved from the flood. The Tower of Babel had risen and fallen. A lot of time had passed since the creation, and a lot of people had lived and died. But today, we hear how God chose a particular time and place, and one particular person – Abram – to begin the revelation of Himself that eventually brought us all here today.

Today, God takes the initiative. God calls Abram to leave his homeland, to leave his father's house, and travel to a new homeland that He, the Lord, will give him. God promises Abram that He will make of him a great nation, and even his name will be a blessing. The Lord chooses Abram and his descendents as His own.

Abram listens. He has a choice, and he obeys. He trusts in the Lord, that His promises will be fulfilled. It's the beginning of something really big, something that made us who we are.

Abram was an old man. Well, he was seventy-five, and that's looking younger and younger to me all the time – but he was apparently living in his father's house, where he'd lived all his life. Now God is asking him to pull up stakes and go somewhere else, to another country, somewhere he's never been before. Scripture doesn't say anything about how Abram must have felt about all this – I can only imagine. But he did it. And look how it all worked out.

“Abram went as the Lord had directed him.”

MOVE

In today's Gospel, we hear an account of another spectacular event, a unique moment in divine revelation – the Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus. Moses the lawgiver and Elijah the prophet and miracle worker are present to reveal that Jesus is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. It all must have been pretty spectacular. But remember that Elijah was the one who heard the voice of God as a tiny whispering sound.

Only three of the Apostles are there to see it, and to hear the voice of God. But they are cautioned not to tell anyone what they saw and heard until after Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

MOVE

Most of the time, we listen to the readings on a particular Sunday – at least I hope we're listening – and don't really make much of a connection with what came before and what comes after. I think I've talked about that before.

Today is one of those Sundays when we can look back, and look forward, and see a theme develop as we travel through Lent. Last Sunday was the first Sunday in Lent. You remember – we heard the story about Jesus fasting alone in the desert, then being tempted by the devil.

Other than a couple of angels there at the end, the only characters in the story were Jesus and the devil. Only the devil was there to see who Jesus really was and what that meant. The rest of the world has not yet seen it.

Today, the door opens just a crack, and three of the Apostles see who Jesus is – God's own Beloved Son. But they can't tell anyone.

Through the Sundays of Lent, the door will open a little wider each week. More and more people will receive the revelation that Jesus the Lord, the Messiah, has indeed come into the world.

Next Sunday, we'll see Jesus reveal Himself to the Samaritan woman at the well. She already knows that the Messiah is coming. Today she begins to

understand that this man standing before her, the man talking to her, the man to whom she has given water, is none other than the Messiah Himself.

Sunday after next, the Jewish leaders will learn that Jesus is the Messiah; through the healing of the man born blind. Through the blindness of one man, the power of God is made visible to the world. Then the Sunday after that, the greatest miracle of all – victory over death itself. Lazarus is raised from the dead, for all to see.

Over the next few weeks, we'll see how salvation history unfolds – slowly, little by little, over a period of time, at the times and places of God's choosing, and with the people of God's choosing. Sometimes it seems almost hopeless. But God's promises will be fulfilled.

Life can be confusing and as frustrating and as puzzling. One of my favorite poems speaks of human history as “Fresh starts, recasting, tired Gethsemanes and tense Golgothas.” Through it all, God is fulfilling His promise in His own way and in His own time.

MOVE

Jesus didn't show the glory of His divine nature very often, as He did today. Mostly, he preached, and taught, and served as an example. Most of His miracles involved relieving human suffering. But some were signs for his apostles to understand who he was and what his mission was. That's what we see today.

Maybe Peter said it best – “Lord it is good that we are here.” I hope Peter speaks for all of us.

READINGS

Reading 1

Gn 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.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 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.

Reading II

2 Tm 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.

Gospel
Mt 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.”