



“No Ordinary Sunday: Living in Hope”

Transfiguration of Our Lord
5:30 p.m. Saturday, February 6, 2016
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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

2 Corinthians 3:12b-4:2; Luke 9:28-36

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

The Law and the Prophets. That is what Jesus said that he had come to fulfill. The Law and the Prophets. We might get a little confused when we hear those terms, though. We *think* we know what they mean. But I wouldn't be surprised if we might be a bit confused.

When we hear the word “law,” probably most of us think of The Police; or the Court System (we've all had enough “Law & Order” spinoffs on TV to start their own channel). Maybe we think about right and wrong, doing good, obeying. Probably we think of Law as something we *have to do*. *Have to*, so that we don't get into trouble.

And prophets; we probably think along the lines of the bearded wacko carrying “The End of the World is Near!” sign. “Do this, Or Else!” kind of thing.

Did you ever think of the Law and the Prophets as a way to bring . . . hope?

Think of the Law as a . . . framework; a guideline; something to bring balance. The Law is designed to bring, not a lot of “Don't do that” or, as in the King James version, “Thou Shalt Not . . .” Rather, the Law is there to help bring about equilibrium. The Law helps humans learn how to live and work with one another. Admittedly, too often some people use the Law to bash one another over the head. But I really do not believe that is the *intent* of the Law.

A similar thing is true about the Prophets. Most of us would, if asked, say that the Prophets are all about doom and gloom; that their primary message is “God's gonna getcha!” Yet, if we were to go and look at all of the Prophets, if we were to examine their message, what they are actually saying is,

God loves you, yet you keep turning your back on God, and that truly hurts God. You turn your back on God by not doing what God wants you to do, which is simply: love God; love each other; help those in need. You would rather love self, and help just yourself. If you do NOT change your ways, and return to following what the Lord your God wants you to do, then God will have to do something drastic to get your attention.

It's that attention getting part that most of us remember. Because too often, the people of God were way better at NOT returning to the Lord God than they were at doing what God requested.

In our gospel lesson, we have the two foremost personalities of the Law and the Prophets:

Moses and Elijah. Moses, who is associated with the Law; and Elijah, the most beloved of the Prophets.

Moses, I am certain, you remember from the story of the Israeli slaves fleeing Egypt after Lord God inflicted the plagues upon them; Moses, who went toe to toe with Pharaoh. Moses, who not only lead the people on their journey back home to the promised land, but who had that special, one on one, face time, with the Lord God up on Mount Sinai, and came down off the mountain top with The Law. The Commandments. The way that the Lord God wants the people of God to live with one another.

Elijah, who, although not the *first* of the Prophets (that honor is reserved for Abraham), **is** the most beloved and revered of the Prophets. Elijah is the first prophet we really get to learn about in any great detail. AND, since he holds the fame of being only the second person in scripture to **not** die, he is long believed to be a forerunner of the Messiah.

So we shouldn't be all that surprised that, when Jesus climbs up the mountain for a little "alone" time, he is . . . what? Accosted? Surrounded? Confronted? by not only a mysteriously and suddenly appearing cloud, but these two figures - these figures who are never identified in and of themselves, but are simply named by the ever exuberant Peter. We can't blame Peter, because he can't help himself. Again and again in scripture we see Peter's mouth work before his brain kicks in.

But what is the benefit of this mountain top experience? Who gains what by this? We don't know if Jesus got what he intended when he started out up the mountain. We don't know if his brief encounter gave him the rest, refreshment, or the revitalization that he was looking for when he grabbed the three disciples and began his hike. We **do** know that Peter, James and John were stunned into silence (which, for Peter, took something).

But, looking at Paul's comments, I wonder if they all came away with a feeling of . . . hope. Because there is hope in the Law. There is hope of living the way God calls us to. We need to remember that strictly following the Law will never *earn* us the love of God - the greatest news of all is that we do not *have* to earn God's love, that love is freely given to us. The Law, though, helps us, to treat one another fairly. The Law reminds us, that God loves us. The Law, I am certain, gives us . . . hope.

There is hope, too, in the message of the Prophets. The hope that we will return to the Lord our God. The hope that we will stop our unfair practices, that we will stop following idols and false gods, and remember all that the Lord has done for us. The Prophets bring a message, not of pain and hurt and anger, but of love; they bring a message of hope.

I think that's *part* of the reason we celebrate Transfiguration right before Ash Wednesday. Because Lent is a somber time. Lent is a period of reflection. Some might even say it is a sad time, for we focus so much on the pain and suffering of our Lord, that we can almost overlook the joy of the resurrection.

That's what I believe these readings are about: the hope that Christ brings. The hope proclaimed in the message of the Prophets. The hope that guides us in following the Law.

This is the message of God, as the voice speaks about Jesus:
This is my Son, my Chosen; Listen to him!

Amen.

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