

The Rev. Michael C. Fedewa

Last Sunday after Epiphany

February 21/22 2009

2 Kings 2:1-12

Psalm 50:1-6

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Mark 9:2-9

I am not real big on titling my sermons. Unless the date of a sermon counts as a title. It would not exactly be awe-inspiring to write on the sign on 3 Mile Rd. the sermon title: February 22. This week though, I have a title for my sermon that's more than just a date. The title I have comes from a broadcast of a Speaking of Faith, a radio show found online and NPR. In an archived show, The Spirituality of Addiction and Recovery, the host and guest were speaking about a book about spiritual awakening. The author of the book is Jack Kornfeld, and the title: "After the Ecstasy, the Laundry". "After the Ecstasy, the Laundry", now that's a title! The book reflects on the fact that after a moment of ecstasy, there is still laundry to be done. After a moment of insight, after a moment of great awareness, you still have the day to day responsibilities of life that need to be met. When someone has had a breakthrough experience, when someone has experienced a time of great ecstasy, the challenge before them is learning how to integrate that experience into their life. After the ecstasy, the laundry. What a great title for my sermon!!!! The only problem is that I came up with the sermon title yesterday, in the middle of the snow storm, and I really didn't feel like changing the sign in front of church.

Every year, the Sunday before Ash Wednesday recounts the Gospel story of Transfiguration of Jesus. The transfiguration Gospel is the culmination of our season of Epiphany. Epiphany began with the story of the star which led the wise men from the east to Jesus. The light of Epiphany has continued to shine over the past weeks as the truth of who Jesus was continued to be revealed. Over the past weeks Jesus has been manifested as the beloved son of God, and a man of great prayer. Jesus has been revealed to be one who has power to heal, and cast out demons. Jesus has been manifested as one with the power to forgive sin.

In the chapter just before the story of the Transfiguration, Jesus was revealed to be the Messiah, God's chosen, anointed one; the one that Israel has been awaiting for centuries. Jesus declared however that he would not be a messiah who rules with power from a throne in a palace. Jesus declared that he would be a messiah who would suffer and die. Jesus is a messiah who will rule from a cross.

Six days later, on a mountain in prayer. Jesus is transfigured. The face of Jesus shines, his clothes become dazzling white. The starlight which led the wise men to Jesus has now come to radiate from the face, the clothes, the person of Jesus. The manifestations which began at epiphany are now complete. This human face of Jesus now shines with the very presence, the very light, the very face of God. Truly, this a moment of ecstasy for Jesus, Peter, James and John.

But, after the ecstasy, the laundry.

After the ecstasy Jesus leads them down the mountain. After the ecstasy Jesus continues his journey to Jerusalem. After the ecstasy, Jesus continues his journey to suffering and death on the cross.

The season of Lent, which begins Wednesday is a 40 day journey to Easter. It is a journey which will end in our celebration of the most important events in the history of the world; the suffering,

death and resurrection of Jesus. It is a journey which recalls that the journey through death to resurrection is a journey which Jesus has taken. This is a journey which we are taking as well. Lent begins with a recognition of our mortality, a recognition that one day we will die. Lent begins with the acknowledgement that we are made of the dust of the earth, and that to the dust of the earth we will return. Jesus, shared our humanity completely. Jesus experienced suffering and death that comes to all humans. We rejoice however in the hope that we have been invited by Jesus to journey with him through death, to resurrection. This is the ecstasy, this is the breakthrough, this is good news we celebrate. We who are dust, are promised eternity. We who are human, are invited to share life in its divine fullness. This is the ecstasy of our faith. Meanwhile, there is the laundry that needs to be done. Lent is the season to do our laundry. Lent is the season where we acknowledge the truth that our world, and our lives are filled with a lot of dirt, a lot of filth. Lent is the season where we acknowledge the truth that we have sinned. As we draw close to the beginning of lent, we ask ourselves: what areas of our life need a good soaking wash? What relationships, what habits need to be cleaned up? What areas of our world and community need cleaning? As we come to the beginning of lent, we consider what we are going to do to be part of this cleansing. How will we, as individuals and as the people of God begin to turn from those sins which soil God's magnificent creation? How will we turn from those sins which have soiled our life? How will you turn from those things which prevent our faces from shining with the dazzling radiance of God's love? How will we pray for the forgiveness and the cleansing of the world?

After the Ecstasy, the Laundry. After the shining light of Epiphany, the cleansing season of lent. Ah, but dear friends, we enter this season of cleansing filled with the radiant hope, that the bright light of Easter awaits. Yes, after the ecstasy there is laundry. But, after the laundry is finished, when our lives and our world are fully cleansed, there is ecstasy that lasts for eternity.