

The transfiguration has come again. This is now the 6th time since I've been here that it's come up in the lectionary. It's a featured story in all 3 synoptic gospels, (though not in John's gospel) and it's one of the only passages of the bible that is regularly read more than once a year. It's read for the first time on the last Sunday after Epiphany -today-- and again on the Feast of the Transfiguration, which is August 6th.

I think I'll ask Abby to preach on August 6...

Just when I think I've said everything that can be said about this passage—I mean how many times can someone preach on Peter—man-of-a-thousand-bad-ideas-said-out-loud—in one year?

So, at Vestry, I just sort of threw this question out—why do you think Moses and Elijah were there with Jesus? Why those two?

They came up with some really creative ideas about that – which I may have to preach on someday--but not the one reason I really thought everyone would say.

... Actually, if I'm being completely honest, Brother Donovan knew the answer—but I wouldn't let him say it – it's not fair—he TEACHES this stuff is EfM!

So back to “Why Moses and Elijah?”

Because of what they represented.

Moses represents the Law. Elijah represents the Prophets.

So why is that important, you ask?

Do you remember when Jesus was asked what the greatest law was—and he said, “Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. On these two laws hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Remember that?

So what does that mean—on these two laws hang all the Law and the Prophets? It means the reason the Hebrews eventually developed 362 laws to go with the 10 commandments is because they were trying to define how to Love God and Love neighbor. And laws were the way to bring about this behavior.

A fellow priest friend of mine has been to the Holy Land 4 times now. She said that each time she returns there, there were more laws. Sometimes the laws make sense, like “No drones in churches!”, but other times, they just didn’t make any sense at all.

For example: on her last trip a couple of weeks ago, when she went into Bethlehem, there were these enormous red signs, by the roadside, written in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. The signs threateningly stated that if you were to take this turn-off, you would enter Area A—controlled by the Palestinian Authority. “This is a danger to life, and illegal for citizens of Israel.” the sign said.

But all she saw were friendly, hospitable people. But—for other people—non-American people-- that sign and the law behind it represented a very real fear and a different reality.

So, it would seem --there are laws and there are laws. Laws can encourage us to be good, to get along with other, and they can forbid the things that can endanger public safety. Moses, was the

most famous Lawmaker, and he endeavored to do the right thing. Make just laws.

But the world grows and changes, and we begin to learn about the world in new ways. And that means that some laws can—and should—change over time. Sometimes we see the need for the change, and urge it to come about—and sometimes we need someone else to wake us up to the new realities—and to speak out for justice and fairness to all.

So we have Prophets.

Prophets speak truth about what they see. If there is injustice anywhere, they call it out. Prophets tell us about God's vision of what the world could be like, if we truly loved God and loved our neighbor. They are unafraid to take on the leaders of the church, leaders of the community, and even the leaders of government if they see us straying from loving God and loving all our neighbors. Elijah, to the Hebrews, was the prophet of Prophets.

So on the mountain this morning--we have Moses and Elijah – the Law and the Prophet --with Jesus.

And Jesus is talking with them.

Society can't function without Law – it becomes anarchy—every person for themselves without any care for others and their dignity.

Prophecy without structure doesn't have a chance to change hearts and societies.

So we have Jesus with them--bringing the focus back to what the pegs of what the law and the prophets hang on: Love.

And God says: Jesus is the beloved and we are to listen to him as he encourages us to love each other, even more than the Law alone requires us to. To find enough justice for all of us, by doing even more than the prophets require us to.

When we just focus on the Law or the Prophets, we can forget what they are hanging on: loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Jesus encourages us to bring the Law and Prophets to together by the greater thing: love beyond just ourselves.

When we do this, transformation---transfiguration--- will happen to all of us. We will become the beings God always intended, and we can go into the towns and the places where signs try and discourage us from entering, and bring that love to all places.

Amen.