

READING FOR SUNDAY– FEBRUARY II, 2024 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Luke 9:18-36

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

¹⁸ “Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” ¹⁹ They answered, “John the Baptist; but others, *Elijah*; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen.” ²⁰ Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “The *Messiah* of God.”

²¹ He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, ²² saying, “The Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.”

²³ Then he said to them all, “If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit them if they gain the whole world but lose or forfeit themselves? ²⁶ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ Indeed, truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

²⁸ Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went UP ON THE MOUNTAIN to pray. ²⁹ And while he was praying, the appearance of his face *changed*, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ³⁰ Suddenly they saw two men, *Moses* and *Elijah*, talking to him. ³¹ They appeared in glory and were speaking about his exodus, which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem. ³² Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep, but as they awoke they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³ Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us set up three *tents*: one for you, one for *Moses*, and one for *Elijah*,” not

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Luke is one of the four gospels. According to tradition it’s written by Luke, a disciple-intern of the apostle Paul. Our reading today is traditionally read on this Sunday, the last before Lent – the period of 6 Sundays preceding Easter. The passage echoes that of the baptism of Jesus in Luke 3, when Jesus is identified by a voice from heaven as God’s beloved.

Elijah:: Malachi 4:5-6 offers an intriguing prophecy that this points to: “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.” To this day, Jewish Seders include an empty chair at the table in anticipation that Elijah will return to herald the Messiah in fulfillment of Malachi’s word.

In the New Testament, Jesus reveals that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy: “All the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come” (Matthew 11:13-14). This fulfillment is also mentioned in Mark 1:2-4 and Luke 1:17; 7:27.

Messiah:: (a Hebrew word), in Greek Christ. It is an image of hope for the Hebrew people that held many ideas and images. Here in this text we see that Jesus has a different vision of Messiah than the disciples. Perhaps that’s why Jesus ordinarily uses the title “The Son of Man.”

The Son of Man:: this is the title that Jesus most uses for himself in the gospels. It comes from the prophet Daniel in Daniel 7:13-14. “¹³ As I [Daniel] watched in the night visions,

I saw one like a Son of Man

coming with the clouds of heaven.

And he came to the Ancient One

and was presented before him.

¹⁴ To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.

realizing what he was saying.³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were terrified as they entered the cloud.³⁵ *Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"*³⁶ When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged, enraged, or surprised you in the text?
- Why would anyone embrace suffering? How can self-sacrifice lead to finding true life?
- Why would Jesus not want the disciples to reveal his identity as Messiah?
- Have you ever had such a mountain-top experience of transformation? How has it (re)shaped you?
- Did such an experience reshape how you see God?; how you see yourself?; both?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, – to act, speak, be, or change, through this scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

UP ON THE MOUNTAIN :: Mountains are mentioned frequently in the Bible because they dotted the landscape where the stories in the Bible take place. As a result, mountains and hills are mentioned more than 500 times in Scripture. Mountains have a logical religious symbolism for Jewish and Christian cultures since they are “closer to God” who dwells in the heavens (as in the sky). As a result, God often reveals himself on a mountaintop in the text. In the Old Testament, the mountains of Sinai and Zion are most significant. Mount Sinai is the place where Moses received the gift of the law, the Ten Commandments. Our text echoes these stories of God’s word and covenant. [Text credit.](#)

Changed: It's after the declaration of what Jesus is about that his white garments are transfigured into royal robes. The word transfiguration means a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state. Here it seems to point less toward what Jesus is becoming, than to what Jesus always was.

Moses, and Elijah: a popular theory is that Moses represented the Jewish Law and Elijah represented the Jewish Prophets. So, when God’s voice from heaven said about Jesus “Listen to Him!” that indicated that the Law and the Prophets must now give way to Jesus who will replace the old way with the new way. He is the completion of the Law and the fulfillment of the prophecies in the Old Testament.

tents :: σκηνὰς pronounced |skay-nay| meaning “a tent, booth, tabernacle, abode, dwelling, mansion, habitation.” The Greek word used here is the same as that used in the Hebrew Scriptures for the Tabernacle – the space/place where God resided among the people as they lived in the desert. The Tabernacle was eventually replaced by the permanent Temple in Jerusalem on Mt. Zion.

from the cloud came a voice:: this wording recalls and mirrors that of the baptism of Jesus in Luke 3:21-22. (²¹ Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And *a voice came from heaven*, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”)