

“You can’t always get what you want.” – Rev. Jennifer Adams
Transfiguration Sunday – B 02/22/09

Well this morning, the readings are anything but boring. Hollywood material if you ask me. First there was a river that got parted by a prophet as he whipped off his mantle, rolled it up and struck the water. Then a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared out of nowhere and a whirlwind swooped in and carried Elijah up into heaven. There was suspense, grief, amazement, fulfillment of sorts and power – all goin’ on here. And in the gospel Jesus took Peter and James and John out to a high mountain and was transfigured right before their eyes. His clothes became a dazzling white and suddenly, (out of nowhere again,) Elijah and Moses were standing there talking to him. But before any of it could go on for very long, a cloud overshadowed them all, the disciples were terrified, a voice from heaven spoke and as fast as it had all come to be, it was gone.

And actually the last several weeks have contained more than their share of drama too. This season of Epiphany began with three wisemen who followed a star in search of the hopes and dreams of their people. And despite the plotting of an evil king, they encountered the Savior, delivered their fine gifts and returned safely home again with good news for the whole world. And then there was the story of Jesus baptism when the heavens opened up wide, the Spirit descended and the voice (for the first time) declared him to be the beloved of God. We heard about how a bunch of local fishermen dropped everything, including their family business in order to follow the Christ – not without it’s own level of family drama, I’m sure. And how Jesus healed lots and lots of people of leprosy, various other illnesses and demons. And these weren’t just simple stories: In one story there was a guy who was actually carried across town on a gurney, lifted onto the roof, and lowered down through a hole by a bunch of friends who refused to be turned away. And the man was healed. During this season, the crowds have grown consistently larger, the followers have increased, it’s been one miracle after another, with at least one revelation per week since Christmas. All easily perceived as “good news.”

But here’s the thing. There’s more. And “the more” is amazing. But in order to get there we need to keep moving. The challenge is that I can relate to Peter’s desire to hunker down in these kinds of stories and stay for awhile, a long while, build a few dwelling places and keep the epiphanies coming. Because if I’m being honest with myself (and all hundred and fifty or so of you) these are the kinds of things I want and I wish for. Epiphany kinds of things - which in all truth are even the kinds of things I pray for. I wish often that my star would shine as brightly and unmistakably as it did for the wise men, so that I could know the destinations God has in mind for me and come right on cue bearing my gifts. I want to be able to lower my friends through the roof of this place (or at least bring them through the doors) and know that they will be physically healed the moment they experience the Body of Christ. And frankly I wouldn’t mind some time on the mountaintop with Jesus and Moses and Elijah – just to experience that level of insight and clarity when all the pieces of all the faith would come together before my eyes. There is a lot about the season of Epiphany that fits my wants, my wishes, even my prayers. And so, with Peter, there’s a part of me that would like to dig in my heels today, build a little shelter around all of us and just stay here. And keep these kinds of Epiphany miracles flowing.

But there is more. And the more is amazing. And this week, we just have to believe that “the more” is worth the leap we are about to take. This step we take is one of the biggest leaps of

faith of the year, coming down the mountain that is Epiphany into the wilderness that is Lent. But we keep walking because, while we have seen so much that we want, so much that we wish for, truth is that even as Epiphany comes to a close, there is still more that we need. There is still so much more that we need. And the good news is that Jesus is willing to give us those kinds of things too.

And so as we shift seasons into Lent, we'll be invited to wrestle with things like temptation, to meet not only our healings but to embrace our hungers too. We'll be asked to heed that call to follow, but we'll also be offered opportunities to receive forgiveness as we stumble through our life's response. We'll see that God is present not only on the mountain but in the depths of the valleys and, in Lent we'll be challenged to look beyond the guy being lowered through the roof, to the Messiah being raised up on the cross. In the end we'll even come to know that whether we're cured or not, it's never the end of the story, because the miracle of resurrection trumps it all, breaks it all open over and over again.

And so, hang on. . . here we go. Down the mountain together from Epiphany into Lent. It won't be easy. But it will be worth it, more worth it than you can imagine it could possibly be. Because as some wise person once said, "You can't always get what you want. But if you try sometimes, you might find, you get what you need."

Amen.