

The Quest

2 Corinthians 4: 3-6

Mark 9: 2-9

The world is in search of something, yet no one seems to know what it looks like or where it is located.

In our hungry, spirit thirsty, curious world, we are flooded with men and women that are in search of the spiritual, the truth, the answer to fill their void. Fundamental to the Christian life is our call as followers of Christ, is to share with the world, our culture that we have the guidebook that tells us not only where we are going but how to get there.

The Holy Spirit through Scripture provides us with a comprehensive map to the truth or "Answer". And today's lectionary text in particular offers us helpful guidance in our search for an authentic to the true answer.

Main Talk

Our reading today takes place late in the ministry of Jesus.

Now early in His ministry, Jesus selected the twelve from a larger group of disciples. These twelve have seen him feed the 5000 with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish and feed the 4000 with 7 loaves.

They were terrified when he calmed the storm and they stood in amazement as he walked on water.

They listened attentively, but often with confusion as he taught them powerful truths to be applied to their lives. They watched the religious become increasingly agitated by his teaching. They could feel the tension escalating. They were not certain what it all meant then Jesus asked Peter "The question". "Who do you say that I am?"

They all certainly remember Peter's response, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." (Mark 8:29) They all should have been able to proclaim those words.

No one was able to say it with any degree of certainty until the impetuous fisherman proclaimed boldly the truth.

Yet, immediately after issuing a response that demonstrates his theological brilliance, Peter shows his humanness his shortcomings by rebuking the one he called the Christ when He spoke of his future suffering and death.

Peter is truly a model of us all. In one moment, he stands as a stalwart of faith and in the very next he cowers in doubt.

In one moment, he walks in courage in the next, he runs in fear. In one moment, he displays wisdom but in less than a breath unbelief.

This man Peter shared the same struggles that you and I wrestle with each and every day.

Now the Scriptures tell us that: Six days after his statement of faith, Peter joins the sons of Zebedee, James and John, on a short excursion with Jesus up a mountain.

Why did Mark mention 6 days? Well, nothing is in the Scriptures by accident. The mention of the number six may serve a dual purpose for Mark. While it conveys a chronological record of time. Six days., it also holds a symbolic value.

In Jewish thought, the number six represents incompleteness. So, Mark also may have been making a theological statement.

The life of a disciple a follower of the Christ is also incomplete. It is never complete. It is an ongoing process.

Throughout our lives, we too display faith and commitment yet also foolishness and doubt.

Like Peter, we are on a journey, we have not arrived. We have no reason to be filled with pride for our achievements or filled with shame for our failures.

We are a work in progress. God is not finished with us ... Yet!

There are truths to be found in our text today.

Our spiritual life begins with God. It is initiated by God.

Six days after Peter makes his proclamation of faith and his statement of rebuke, Jesus takes this impulsive disciple along with James and John up the mountain.

In our, "take charge, make it happen world", we are uncomfortable with the suggestion that we are not in control.

Peter, James, and John were taken up the mountain by Jesus. They did not ask. They did not make an appointment. They responded They responded. to the Lord's call - in obedience.

So, our Spiritual Journey Begins with God It is initiated by God.

And secondly this expedition of faith requires us to recognize and understand that we do not walk the journey alone.

Jesus took three disciples with him to the top of the mountain. He did not go alone.

Yet, In contrast our culture tends to enjoy its spiritual experiences alone. This demand for privacy and the value that we place on individual autonomy is relatively new in social thought.

Prior to the 1500's, western culture placed a greater importance on community. A person's identity came from their membership in their family, tribe, guild or Church.

One historian noted: "It took the invention of print to tear us from our community and plant the dream of isolation in our brains."

To which the theologian, Charles Swindell comments, "I suppose (this) is another way of saying that most of us would rather curl up all alone with a book than with another person."

We need time alone with God but our experience in God is incomplete unless done in relationship with others.

The Christian faith is not just a set of doctrines, it is not a philosophy, nor is it a set of rules that one may follow on their own. The essence of the faith is relationship, a relationship that we enjoy with our God.

And It is also a relationship that is discovered, strengthened, enhanced, and nourished in community.

Jesus did not tell Peter that his personal faith would become so strong that the gates of hell would not prevail against him.

Jesus said, "I tell you; you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail, against It" (Matthew 16:18)

The gates of Hell will not prevail against His Church. There is power within the Church, within the Community of Faith.

Our strength is not found in an isolated faith but in relationship. A relationship with God AND with one another.

We may experience God at times alone on the mountaintop.

Yet those isolated experiences become deepened they become strengthened through relationship through community.

Our Spiritual Journey begins with God. It is initiated by God.

Secondly Our expedition of faith is not a journey that we walk alone.

Thirdly Jesus is always at the Centre of our Spiritual Life.

Many are looking for the answer for a vaguely defined spirituality for their truth.

Every once in a while, one of them picks up something or discovers something that they find insightful and boldly announce, "That's it I have found the Answer."

And many may agree for a time, that it looks like "It." And someone, usually a "quasi spiritual authority", hangs a sign on "It" That declares: "This is it This is the Spiritual Answer."

And then everyone goes home again, until the next expedition to find "It" is proposed.

People are attracted to "The Spiritual".

Fresh expeditions for the "answer" set out almost daily across this country and across the world.

Many are searching. In fact, many we encounter are searching for their "Answer". They are searching because There is an emptiness within them that they need to fill.

So, they search for their "Answer". For the meaning of existence, for the spiritual answer.

We know the answer. And we know the Way.

His name is Jesus. And He did not hide the Truth he shared the truth with the world:

"I am the way and the truth and the life No one comes to the Father accept through me." (John 14:6)

While standing on the mountain, Peter, James and John were amazed. Amazed at the transfiguration of Jesus in all his glory. Amazed also at the appearance of Moses and Elijah.

But after God spoke and the cloud lifted, Mark records, they saw no one only Jesus.

Our expedition of faith has an ultimate destination. It is not to a place. It is not a feeling. It is a person. His name is Jesus. Jesus Name above all Names. And He alone is able to fill that yearning. That empty space that lies within each human heart.

Do you know him?

Do you truly know Him? You can. He is the Way; He is the Truth, and He is the Life. His name is Jesus. And He is calling you home. Amen.