

## Second Sunday of Lent – February 21, 2016

I wonder what Peter, James, and John were thinking as Jesus led them up the mountain. Were they just going along for the hike or did they think something special was going to happen? Whatever they thought, what did happen surely far exceeded their expectations. What happened on that mountain was, as they say, the mother of all peak experiences. After it was over, the gospel says simply that they kept silence. Peter, James and John were in over their heads. They were being called to a new dimension of faith; everything they thought before had to be rearranged.

The basic challenge is the same for us too. Can we believe in what is beyond us or must we cling only to what we can see or touch or taste or feel? Can we let God be God?

Faith always calls us to humility. “Look up at those stars,” said God to Abraham. “Can you count them? Well, even if you can, they don’t begin to point to the future I have in store for you and your descendants.” Abraham was grateful for this promise but he had no children. That obvious problem was but a minor detail for God. So what was Abraham to do? He put his faith in God and gave over to God the space to work with the emptiness in his life, and that was all he needed.

I’ve always admired folks who stand truly and humbly before God. Look at the folks who run soup kitchens or food pantries, who rely more on God than on reserve funds. They do everything they can; they understand that it is not enough. Then they laugh at the hopelessness of it all and set the table or begin to fill the shopping bags because they know the food will come.

Having watched some of these models of faith, I suspect that such faith is like riding a bicycle – no amount of theory is enough, only practice.

Today’s Scriptures offer us two approaches for our own faith journeys. When we know our need far outstrips our ability, then Abraham and the models of faith from our own experience teach us to trust that God works in ways we can’t imagine. And when we don’t know how to face the problem of suffering, when we wonder where God is, when our concept of God has proven too small, the disciples who came down the mountain in silence remind us that we can comprehend only a glimpse of God’s plan – and that it will always exceed and upset our expectations. God is always going to invite us beyond our current stage of growth. There is far more to life than what pleases the eye or delights the taste buds.

Would we want to cling only to our small but controlled world or put our faith in what is beyond our own power to comprehend? There are multiple paths; they all are opened for us by the same God.