**2 Kings 2:1-12**

**2 Corinthians 4:3-6**

**Mark 9:2-9**

Our scripture lessons today are some of the most mystical in the Bible. The prophet Elijah is swept up by a whirlwind into heaven; Jesus is transfigured into dazzling light. These are high-water marks of mysticism. And yet, they are linked to what is down-to-earth and corporeal – of the body. They are linked to seeing and hearing.

Elijah had a traveling companion on his journey to the whirlwind. His student and disciple, Elisha, follows close behind in spite of his teacher’s protests. Eventually Elijah asks him what he wants and he says a “double portion of your spirit.” The master doesn’t say “yea” or “nay” but presents him with his final test: “If you *see* me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you.” Elijah knew that if his student was not yet trained to see the reality of what was going to happen, he would not be able to handle a “double portion” of the old prophet’s spirit.[[1]](#footnote-1)

To see with spiritual eyes is to see our world as diaphanous – sheer – transparent to the Divine. Spiritual eyes see God’s Divine Life and Energy as always present; always life giving; moving among us and through us and going on ahead of us. There are miracles present in everyday life but too many go unnoticed. We see superficially. We see the surface of things, and we don’t always perceive even that correctly. But we can commit ourselves to seeing holiness in every situation. In sublime selflessness, we can commit to seeing and bringing out the holy in others.

Elisha did, in fact, see the “chariot of fire and the horses of fire.” He saw with spiritual eyes. He passed the test. He had persevered enough in his life with God to see a deeper reality around him.

When the disciples saw Jesus transfigured, they too saw a deeper reality. They saw a reality disguised by flesh and bone. They saw divine light shining through Jesus, through the cells of his body; through his soul.[[2]](#footnote-2) We seldom see the inner light of our companions. With spiritual eyes we’re invited to see “more” in others and to see “more” in ourselves.

But when they saw Jesus transfigured, they heard a voice. The voice of God proclaimed, “This is my Son, the Beloved; *listen to him*!” I’ve always thought this was an odd thing for God to say. Why not just leave it with, “This is my Beloved.”

However “throughout Scripture, God challenges us to listen: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one’ (Dt. 6:4). In the New Testament Jesus admonishes those who have ears to hear but don’t (Mk. 4:9; 23). Neither do they hear or listen. Our lives are to be based on what we hear from God.”[[3]](#footnote-3) This is spiritual hearing.

Mother Teresa describes it well. *In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, you will hear God. Then you will know you are nothing. It is only when you realize your nothingness, your emptiness, that God can fill you. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence.[[4]](#footnote-4)*

To engage in spiritual hearing as God urges – “This is my beloved: Listen to him” – is to develop some habits of silence and of listening. Now is a great time to do this. Practice quiet: quiet your mind. Stop creating anxiety. Now is a good time because Lent begins this week. Lent is nothing more than a time of intentionality. In order to fast, you have to remember not to put food in your mouth. As you remind yourself not to eat, you get a sense of how mindless your eating has become. Perhaps.

In the intentionality of Lent, we can become reacquainted with God all over again. Like a second honeymoon. If you’ve been married a long time, you know that a second honeymoon is when you once again become very attentive to your mate; very accommodating; very pleasing.

The Sunday before Lent every year we read about the transfiguration of Jesus. It is meant to give us strength and courage for Ash Wednesday and the 40 days that follow. These are days that truly prepare us to rejoice in the resurrection.

Every year we read how the disciples want to stay on the mountaintop while Jesus is transfigured. Who can blame them? They want to build little huts and hunker down. Who wants everyday life? That’s the place of conflict and challenge and what can be dulling routine. We like falling in love but then comes doing the dishes, managing family finances; changing diapers. We want to experience God without life’s complications. This kind of outlook has, in our age, come to be known as the “me and Jesus” life. It’s all of the Jesus with none of the work.

But it is the complications of life that lead to transformation. It is the complications of life that cause us to persevere with God. If, like Elisha, we persevere enough in our life with God, we gain spiritual sight. If, like Mother Teresa, we practice enough silence, we gain spiritual hearing.

As well as intentional living, allow Lent to be your time of reflection. Reflect on how life has caused you to change. Have you been transformed into one with spiritual sight and spiritual hearing? Or have you withered into a person of complaint, criticism and blame? It’s not too late to change direction. That’s what Lent is for. Besides, we all have yet more progress to make.

1. Ragan Sutterfield, The Ekklesia Project, quoted in Synthesis, a sermons help publication, 2-11-2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Bruce Epperly, “The Transfiguration of Jesus,” http://www.patheos.com/blogs/livingaholyadventure, February 11, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Thomas Hoyt, Jr., *Proclamation 5: Interpreting the Lessons of the Church Year, Series B, Lent,* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993). Quoted in Synthesis, a sermons help publication, 2-11-2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Quoted by the Rev. Kelly Isola, www.unity.org/resources/articles/our-spiritual-senses-part-4-hearing [↑](#footnote-ref-4)