

Every One of Us, If We Would Follow Jesus, Must Go with Him to Jerusalem

"The location of this transfiguration story," following a section where Jesus has been teaching his disciples "that he must go to Jerusalem where he will suffer and be put to death," the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his sermon Sunday, "tells us a great deal about how we might understand what happens here on the mountain. . . .

"If you have ever been fortunate enough to have an encounter with the divine that shook you to the foundations or opened your eyes to insight that you had never seen before," he continued, "there was a reason for it." The disciples were given not only "a glimpse of divine glory, but also . . . strength for their journey of following Jesus back down that mountain to his death. This is the reason why God allows you similar kinds of experiences, for the purpose . . . is to strengthen us for what lies ahead of us."

"Every one of us, if we would follow Jesus, must go with him to Jerusalem. . . . On Wednesday we'll be marked with ashes to remind us of our mortality, and we will begin our journey through Lent. We will enter a time of sustained prayer and reflection where we discover anew that we don't follow Jesus merely with our thoughts, but with our hearts."

"This is the time when we are invited once again to put to death all that is not God's best for us, . . . to set aside some things in our lives in order that we might pray and focus more fully on Jesus." In the words of the Collect for the day: "O God, who before the passion of your only-begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: Grant to us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory."



"All of these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me," Satan said to Jesus. This image represents the temptations of Christ, about which we'll hear in the Gospel reading Sunday. Image credit: markcephastan.blogspot.com

The Temptations of the Religious Are Insincerity and Inconsistency: A Divorce between Liturgy and Life—A Sure Way to Receive God's Grace in Vain

"Tonight we are confronted once gain with a reality that many of us would prefer to avoid," the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his Ash Wednesday sermon, "the fact that we are mortal creatures. The ashes we receive on our foreheads tonight are a stark reminder that our lives are tainted by the corrosive effects of sin, the most painful of which is death—but the ashes on our foreheads are not merely the sign of death, for they are in the shape of a cross. And so the message of Ash Wednesday (and of Lent) is this: we will die, and we cannot escape it, but we can die in Christ.

"During this Lenten season, we will encounter two themes as the days pass. First, we will encounter, in ways perhaps painful to us, the depth of the human condition, . . . our own sins, and the deadly consequences of our sins for both individuals and society. The goal of this is not to throw us into the abyss of guilt, but to reveal to us the depth of God's love for us, and to lead us (p.2→)

Editor: Box 972, Boise, ID 83701. 208-336-3951, harbingermail@aol.com

Pastor: The Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander, epworthrector@msn.com

On the Web: www.epworthchapelonthegreen.org

Sundays
10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service
11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation
11:45 a.m.: Post-service discussion
6:00 p.m.: (First Sundays only) Evensong

Tuesday and Thursday, 6:30 p.m.: Lenten Evening Prayers

Readings, 2/10: Gen. 2:4-9, 15-17, 25—3:7; Ps. 51:1-13; Rom. 5:12-21; Mt. 4:1-11. **2/17:** Gen. 12:1-8; Ps. 33:12-22; Rom. 4:1-17; John 3:1-17.

Prayer Emphases: Mauritania; Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod; Trinity Church, NYC, and the Rev. Dr. James H. Cooper; Christian social workers; parishioners on Butte Street.

(**Sermon, cont'd.**) to respond to that love in ever greater faith and obedience. Second, as this Lenten season progresses we will have opportunities to reflect on the new possibilities and new life offered to us in Jesus Christ. We will see that although our sin cuts deep, Christ's grace cuts deeper, (with) healing available to the moral sickness that plagues us. . . . Isaiah reminds us . . . of two temptations that come to those who are religious: . . . insincerity and inconsistency. Isaiah warns us that it can be easy for a disconnect to occur between our worship and our daily lives, between what we pray and what we do. That kind of divorce between liturgy and life is a disaster, and is not why Christ died. . . . The sure way to receive God's grace in vain is not to allow that grace to change and transform your life! . . . At the heart of our spiritual lives and worship should be a desire to please God and to express our love for God and others."