

The Kicker

Wayne Waibel – 02/11/2024

That command of Christ's to Peter, James and John can be very confusing for us. Why would He instruct them to tell no one what they had seen? Wasn't the brilliance of eternity at the very heart of His ministry?

And if you think it's difficult for us to fathom with our advanced insights and studied perspectives, imagine what it must have been like for His disciples who had no understanding at all of what He meant by "till the Son of Man had risen from the dead."

It was probably pretty easy for the three of them to keep their mouths shut since they had no idea what He was talking about. What they had just witnessed was the Law – represented by Moses, and the Prophets – represented by Elijah, being fulfilled by the beloved Son of God.

Upon this, they were commanded to "Hear Him." Because He was the Word made flesh. That was the kicker.

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Transfiguration Sunday has come to represent the midpoint between the Baptism of Jesus and the Crucifixion. It signals the beginning of the Lenten Season and all that implies.

That's what we have come to acknowledge, but for the disciples – they were still trying to figure out what Jesus meant by rising from the dead. They had no context.

As Jesus stands alongside Elijah and Moses, His word about the cross stands alongside the Law and the Prophets. And what this signals is the inbreaking of the divine plan to reconcile creation. This inbreaking comes with deliberate certainty known to God alone.

Crucifixion is in Christ's future, but the Father's honor and glory and power are His as well. Jesus' ministry was to announce the reign of God on earth as it is in heaven. With it came the command to love. And the words used to convey that command completely reoriented humankind away from the prevailing powers and toward God and one another.

That Word is what drove the powerful forces of empire to do everything they could to snuff it out. Even to the point of crucifixion. But the brilliance of the Messiah rose above their continuous efforts to extinguish, because the power of love will always overcome the assaults of evil. Always.

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Congregations - like prophets - are not immune to the hardships of life. I don't need to go into any great detail outlining the many and varied challenges we currently endure as a people. All human awareness has an interpretive element. The trick is to remain steadfast in what you know to be true.

As a nation, our truth has been so strangled as to render it invisible at best – kidnapped at the very least. Perhaps that is what Mark meant by calling Christ's crucifixion a "ransom." Aside from that one word – there is really no attempt at explaining the crucifixion. To this day – it remains a mystery understood only by God.

We know that it was empires' "remedy" for the love Christ preached. His mission to speak that truth to power cost Him His life, but opened the door for us to one day encounter life eternal.

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Elisha was a sterling example of standing humbly yet steadfastly in the presence of God. And his ability to do so garnered him a greater sphere of blessing as he stepped into his role as prophet. A calling he felt woefully inadequate to fill, making him just like every other prophet before him. To be strong in faith is to accept one's vulnerability.

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It's interesting to note that the genuinely great leaders in the world have been those individuals who were called into service and viewed their roles as precisely that – not so much as leaders, but as servants.

Contrast that with the self-proclaimed heads of state – captains of industry, etc. who were driven – not called – to their positions of authority. Those who sought the elevated perches of this world. They may command huge crowds and vast sums of money, but their rule is fleeting and ultimately empty. It is hard to see the glory of God when YOU are standing in the spotlight.

The good news is that we still have the freedom to choose whom we will follow. We understand that when we identify with our God, we follow His light. And that light reveals, not so much *who* we are, but *whose* we are. That is the kicker. Amen.