

## Bible Study Guide: Week of 2-21-2022

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

### Luke 9:28-43a

<sup>28</sup>Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup>And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup>Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. <sup>31</sup>They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup>Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. <sup>33</sup>Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” —not knowing what he said. <sup>34</sup>While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup>Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” <sup>36</sup>When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

<sup>37</sup>On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. <sup>38</sup>Just then a man from the crowd shouted, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. <sup>39</sup>Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. <sup>40</sup>I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” <sup>41</sup>Jesus answered, “You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” <sup>42</sup>While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.

<sup>43</sup>And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

### **<sup>28</sup>Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.**

Jesus withdraws with his closest disciples to pray. The occurrence of this revelation of Jesus on a mountain alludes back to the mountain top experiences of Moses and Elijah—Moses on Mt. Sinai when he received the law; Elijah on Mt. Horeb when he found God’s presence not in earthquake or fire or wind, but in the sound of sheer silence.

### **<sup>29</sup>And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.**

The Transfiguration takes place “while Jesus was praying,” underscoring the power of prayer to bring about connection with the presence of God. Jesus’ appearance brings to mind Moses’ holy glow after his time on Sinai.

### **<sup>30</sup>Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. <sup>31</sup>They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.**

And, speaking of Moses and Elijah, here they are! The two figures, representing the law and the prophets (Scripture), speak with Jesus about his “departure.” The Greek for “departure” here is *“exodon”*—literally “a way out” or “an exit.” It is a clear cognate of our English word *Exodus*—fitting, given the presence of Moses here. Jesus and the two patriarchs are discussing his coming suffering, crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension.

### **<sup>32</sup>Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. <sup>33</sup>Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” —not knowing what he said.**

Now rather than looking back to the Old Testament we look forward, this time to the end of the gospel. The sleepiness of the disciples is similar to their falling asleep in Gethsemane (Luke 22:45). Here as there, the disciples fail to grasp the magnitude of the moment and fall short. Peter, in particular, suggests building three dwellings. These “dwellings” or “booths” or “tabernacles” were (and are still) used during the Festival of Booths or Tabernacles each year to commemorate the wilderness wandering of the Israelites. So in part, Peter seems to realize that something significant has happened that relates to the salvation history of Israel, but he fails to understand that Jesus’ mission compels him back down the mountain and toward the cross.

**<sup>34</sup>While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup>Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”**

The presence of a cloud calls to mind times in scripture that God uses clouds to both conceal and reveal the divine presence. The voice from the cloud (and the message about God’s son) calls our minds back to the baptism of Jesus in the beginning of the gospel.

**<sup>36</sup>When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.**

When the Transfiguration is done, Jesus alone remains. Moses and Elijah and the cloud are no longer present. The message seems clear that Jesus continues and indeed fulfills the salvation begun by God through Moses and Elijah. He is now the one to whom the disciples should listen and whom they should follow. Unlike in Mark’s version, Jesus doesn’t order them to tell no one about their experience, but they choose to remain silent about it for the time being.

**<sup>37</sup>On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. <sup>38</sup>Just then a man from the crowd shouted, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. <sup>39</sup>Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. <sup>40</sup>I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.”**

This story is, at first glance, an odd juxtaposition with the story of the Transfiguration. Upon returning from the mountain, Jesus (the chosen Son) is called upon to heal the only son of a concerned father. The disciples, despite being given authority over all demons earlier in chapter 9, could not cast out this demon or help this family.

**<sup>41</sup>Jesus answered, “You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” <sup>42</sup>While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.**

Jesus’ response to the father is surprising to us. His comment about the entire generation being faithless and perverse resists easy interpretation. Is he speaking to his disciples? To the father? To both? To others? His generalization about the entire generation seems to include all of these and more. He is likely frustrated because he has just spent time speaking with the Patriarchs about his coming passion. Despite hearing these words, the disciples don’t yet understand or trust Jesus’ salvific plan and power. In fact, right after this passage, Jesus says this: “Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands.” But, we read, they didn’t understand what he was talking about. Jesus is finding that his message is not easy for his followers to absorb.

**<sup>43</sup>And all were astounded at the greatness of God.**

Verse 43 is a fitting end to this encounter. Although nobody understood what Jesus was doing exactly, the greatness of God was evident in his ability to help and heal the demon-possessed boy. The same message—the greatness of God—was the primary concern for Moses and Elijah as well as for Jesus. Here, even though the people fail to grasp the truth of Transfiguration and Jesus’ teachings right away, they are moved to acknowledge and worship God through Jesus’ ministry and miracles.

#### **Discussion/Reflection Questions:**

- 1. What is the most meaningful or powerful part of the Transfiguration to you? Why?**
- 2. In what ways do we seek to “build three dwellings” to stay in moments of glory in our own lives? Where is God calling us to go and what is God calling us to do instead?**
- 3. How do you think the story of the demon-possessed boy ties in (or doesn’t tie in) with the Transfiguration story?**