

Trying to Bring Things to Light

II Kings 2: 1-12; I Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9; Psalm 50:1-6 February 22, 2009

Have you ever tried to help someone understand something that seems very simple to you but is incomprehensible to the other person? Something basic like, “Don’t wear white shoes after Labor Day,” or, “The fork almost always goes on the left side of the plate,” or, “Being ‘green’ doesn’t mean that we actually try to look like Kermit the Frog, who sung ‘It isn’t easy being green,’ it means that we become better stewards of our lives and our earth.”

It can be terribly frustrating for most of us to try to bring things to light for people who are incredibly dense, or like to pretend they are, or for people who are just too stubborn to see any other viewpoint than their own. Most of us try to gently explain to our friends how they might appear to others because of the way they act and react to people and situations. But, many believe they have the only answers to life and that their way of being is the only way to be. This tunnel vision only seeks to separate people and not to bring them together. Sometimes a startling jolt is just what is needed to help others understand what is going on all around them.

Elisha did not need such a jolt to know that Elijah was a great prophet. He had been with him for a while and had seen him at work. Last week we considered the healing of Naaman brought about by Elijah.

Knowing how valuable Elijah’s work was made Elisha want to be with him and to learn from him and even to inherit his abilities. Elijah was, most likely, the leader of a guild of prophets. The double portion of spirit Elisha asks for is the amount a first-born son would normally receive from a father—twice as much as the other male heirs. Or, in this case, than the other prophets who followed Elijah.

The amazing thing about this story is that God did not allow Elijah to die, but simply took him up into heaven with him, indicating the greatness of the prophet. It might also indicate that Elijah was going to return again at a later date.

See the groundwork being laid for the coming of the Messiah? This is one of those little tidbits that was built into the story of the nation Israel to try to keep it on the pathway it had been called to follow; to keep believing that someone would come, maybe Elijah again, to be the savior of the nation.

Elisha did not need any explanation of what was going on or why. He understood without being hit over the head with a two by four.

Our reading about Jesus, from the gospel of Mark, is the story of the “Transfiguration” of Christ. It is meant to shine a little light of understanding on the disciples, John, James and Peter.

As we know from the story of Jesus, the disciples were slow to catch on to who he was. It had to be very dramatic for them to see Jesus glowing with a heavenly light and to see Elijah and Moses talking to him. We are told Peter, James and John were “frightened,” a normal human reaction.

Jesus was in very good company on that mountain top. Companions who proclaimed, just by their appearance with him, that he was, indeed, special. To make

sure the two disciples “got it” a voice from heaven was added reminding them, that, “This is my Son, the Beloved, listen to him.”

The disciples considered this vision so real that they offered to build three dwelling places for the three prophets they saw before them. Light had been shed on their leader and we can be fairly certain that they understood a little better his message and the urgency of his mission. But, just a little better. It seems that it was not until after the resurrection that they finally began to understand the importance of the man who had walked beside them for three brief years. At the very least, he was ranked way up there with two of the greatest prophets the Hebrew nation had known.

Paul, in his letter to the church at Corinth, mentions that things will be brought to light when the Lord comes. The expectation was that this would happen during the lifetimes of his readers. It didn't.

We cannot wait until that happens, if it does, to try to begin to understand the way our lives are to be led and lived. We cannot wait for a day somewhere out there to try to grasp what it is that is the will of God for our lives. The good thing is that we do not have to wait. What is required of us to have successful and fulfilling lives has been spelled out for us from the days of the Hebrew Scriptures through the pages of the New Testament.

The simplest words are from the prophet Micah, “And what does the Lord require of you? To do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Do not judge, be kind in all you do and never be arrogant or a know-it-all. People often reciprocate in kind when they discover they are being treated with respect and kindness and everyone benefits.

Jesus gave further instruction when he reminded us to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and your neighbor as yourself.” If we manage to pay attention and open our minds and hearts to all we inherently know, we find ourselves on the pathways of love and peace within ourselves and for others. This is where we should be.

Moving through life is a growth process. We gain much by living and observing what goes on all around us. Piece by piece and inch-by-inch, we become more of what it is God hopes we will become. Through this process, things come into our consciousness bringing light and enlightenment. This is not an easy task, for we need to see ourselves as we are. We learn about ourselves and the people and the world around us. We discover how we affect people through words and actions, whether we push them away or gather them. It is a continual process of adjustment and readjustment. But through this difficult process, we discover what has the most value in life, and if we are wise, we build on it as Elisha did. We always need to try to move forward in faith and life and truth, trying to bring things to light for ourselves and for those we care about.

-- Amen