

The Transfiguration of Our Lord (A/RCL)
Matthew 17.1-9
February 6, 2005
Holy Trinity, Manasquan

You may recognize the name of Pierre L'Enfant as the architect of Washington, D.C. I know of him because I used to live there, and once studied the city's history and architecture in preparation for a job interview to become a tour guide on a sightseeing bus. I didn't get the job ☺.

What I **didn't** know then is that L'Enfant was a sculptor as well as a city planner. I learned that tidbit when visiting St. Paul's Chapel with our confirmands this past December. L'Enfant created the artwork which rises above the main altar at St. Paul's, a sculpture of the tablets containing the Ten Commandments, with golden light beams descending upon them, emblazoned with the Hebrew letters that spell Yahweh's name.

When our tour guide pointed all this out, she mentioned that the members of a mid-town temple faithfully covered shifts at the chapel, the whole time it served as a respite and refreshment center for the 9-11 workers. The first time they arrived to help out, the rabbi saw the Ten Commandments and Hebrew letters on the altarpiece and said, "I see you were expecting us."

Our first lesson today is about Moses ascending Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, a gift from God to the people of Israel. In Exodus we read,

The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and **wait** there; and I will give you the tablets of stone.... (Ex. 24.12)

Come and **wait**. In turn, Moses says to the elders,

"**Wait** here for us, until we come to you again...." (Ex.24.14)

Moses went up the mountain, and sure enough, God made him wait. Interesting, isn't it, since God, unlike us, is never running behind schedule? Moses didn't wait because God decided to have an extra cup of coffee or had to stop on the way to gas up His tank. Moses waited because that's what God wanted him to do. God wanted Moses to **learn** or **experience** something by waiting.

We don't know what Moses saw during that time. We **do** know, though, that:

The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. (Ex. 24.16)

So maybe he didn't see anything at all, except for pea soup fog similar to what rolls in here at times. Even if Moses couldn't **see** his hand in front of his face, he surely **felt** something. Awe? Expectation? Dread? The Hebrews believed that no one could see God and live, yet God had said He would **give** Moses tablets of stone. That's some **close** contact.

...[O]n the seventh day [God] called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. (Ex. 24.16-17)

Moses went from fog to fire. Maybe his six days of waiting on the cloud-muffled mountaintop served as preparation for him to see and experience "the glory of the LORD," the Shekinah, the blazing forth of God's brilliant being.

This coming Wednesday, **Ash** Wednesday, we begin forty days of **waiting** for Easter. "Waiting," sort of. Let me confess I can be a very impatient person. Sometimes even I, the pastor, get mired in the desire to **get Lent over with**. Then the Holy Spirit reminds me of what I already knew, that Lent's not just a time of **waiting**, it's a time of **preparation**. If a baby is born prematurely, it suffers the physical consequences. If Lent

were to end prematurely, we'd suffer the spiritual consequences. Lent **does** “end prematurely” for us personally when we **ignore** rather than **invest** in it.

One way we can **invest** in Lent is to worship more often during the forty days. If you haven't been worshipping every weekend, commit to it between now and Easter. Make it happen. Put worship **high** on the list of priorities rather than adopting a “wait and see” attitude that often means it gets edged out. If you're faithful to weekend worship already, consider **also** coming out on Wednesdays for the 7 a.m. Communion service, which is usually over by 7:20, leaving plenty of time for most folks to get to work or school. You can even grab a doughnut on your way out! If that's too early for you, there will be Soup & Scripture every Wednesday from noon to one at the Presbyterian Church. There's also our weekly soup supper at 6:30 p.m. here on Wednesdays. Evening Service of the Word will be at 7:30 p.m., every week but Holy Week.

God wanted Moses to **learn** or **experience** something by waiting. God wants that for us, too. If we choose to **invest in** rather than **ignore** Lent, by increased prayerfulness, some form of meaningful sacrifice, giving the gift of time, talent, treasure to bless others, we'll be primed to see “the glory of the LORD” in a more profound way once Easter comes. Once Christ comes, too....

In the second lesson from the Second Letter of Peter, we're advised to remember the revelation from on high at the time of Our Lord's transfiguration:

“This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” (2 Peter 1.17)

The author of the letter says:

...[B]e attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts (2 Peter 1.19)

More waiting, “until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” If we wait in faith, hope and love, then when our Lord comes He will see the fruits of our prayerful preparation and say, much as the rabbi did, “I see you were expecting me.” The smile on His face will be the glory of the LORD revealed to us.