

Sermon: Do Not Blink!  
Scripture: 2 Kings 2:1-12, Mark 9:2-9  
Sunday, February 14, 201  
Transfiguration Sunday  
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Springfield, Illinois

## 2 Kings 2:1-12

Our first Scripture reading, 2 Kings 2:1-12, tells a story of Elijah's last moment on earth before he is taken up to heaven by a whirlwind. Having accomplished all he is called on to do by the Lord, he is giving last instruction to his successor Elisha. Elijah was one of the mighty prophets who are held in high esteem in Christian heritage, as he and Moses are depicted in the Transfiguration of Jesus. Let us hear the Word of the Lord sharing with us this morning.

*Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent." Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent." Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground. When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. Amen.*

Each year, the Sunday prior to the Ash Wednesday and marking the end of the season of Epiphany, we gather and remember the mystery of Jesus' fully divine and human presence in our midst. Our Gospel reading comes from Mark 9:2-9, which is also shared in Matthew and Luke. Let us listen to the Word of the Lord as we prepare our hearts and minds for the Lenten journey.

*Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. Amen.*

Let us pray. Living Word and shining Sun of God, in your presence we see the face of holiness. Overshadow us with your power and grace, so that we may keep your commandments and speak your truth with courage and love; all for the dazzling glory of your holy name. May the Word of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing to you, our Rock and Redeemer.

"Blink or you'll miss it." It's an expression that many of you are familiar with. It usually means something is barely visible because it is going by too quickly. One may use this expression when one passes by a very small town. You may also hear this phrase from someone telling you don't blink or you will miss it during an important part of the movie. This is why I usually don't watch a movie that I really want to enjoy with someone who has already seen it. Out of various times I heard this expression used, it seems most befitting when one refers to this or similar expression about people whom you love. Even heavy metal artists such as Aerosmith composed music titled, "I don't wanna miss a thing," referring to the desire not wanting to miss out a moment with the person whom you love. And just when you think you have given all your love, you find yourself pouring out more love to the children as other people remind you not to blink or you will miss it, as they grow up too fast.

As we welcome year 2021's Valentine's Day, I am reminded that I have known my dearest person, Sophia, majority of my life as I venture into my 40s. I am still getting used to watching a young lady, Diana, who continues to mesmerize me with her talents, and Zachariah who weren't even born yet when we first arrived at Westminster. He is now already two, calling me daddy with a confidence that I will answer him each time. I often think and pray about the person they will become, the person whom they will share their lives with, and making a difference to the world and people around them. But for now, I want to enjoy the journey with them, looking forward to their first bicycle ride, first tooth fairy experience, their first date - although I have to admit it will be difficult. With Sophia, I look forward to sharing many treasures on our journey together, such as being on Springfield Art Association's dancing with the stars next month. Thank you, Marty for giving us this gift to us. I do not want to blink, I don't wanna miss a thing.

Then I wondered for who else I also felt this longing of not missing out on their lives... and realized my limitations and sin of humanity. That I did not recall my first perfect love. It was not an immediate thought that God wants this type of intimate, deep relationship with me and you. We are called children of God for a purpose and we know where we will end up for eternity, and yet God does not want to

blink, God don't wanna miss a thing. The question for us is do we feel the same way for our Heavenly Groom?

Today's passages share with us few lessons on what we should be not losing the sight of. In the Old Testament, the story of how Elijah's power got transferred to Elisha. The impending recall of Elijah from the Lord on high was imminent, and Elisha wanted to be like his mentor and father-figure. Every minute, each step, and every word they could share was a gift. Elisha did not want to blink nor drop any of the final words. The last words of Elijah that is shared with us is "if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." It is the greatest gift Elijah had given to Elisha. It told him to put up your guard, prepare for this event that is coming in the unbeknownst time. It is like asking Elisha to put on a blinkers. Blinkers are those eye patch looking covers on the racing horses to block out the distractions of the large crowds who are cheering for them. Blinkers keep the horses calm and focused to look forward to what is important; the journey to get to the finish line. Through this sharing of wisdom, Elisha knew what he was looking for and was able to witness the chariots and horsemen of God, a glimpse of an invisible army of angels. I am sure that Elisha believed, but at this moment it also had to quench any remnant of his unbelief. So friends, let us also put our spiritual blinkers on and ask God to unveil the heavenly mysteries and miracles that are occurring around us to help us in our unbelief.

The New Testament reading of transfiguration is not foreign to us. It is here as our sanctuary window to remind us the glory of God. Halfway through Mark's gospel, we observe Jesus in full human and divine form. It is at this point when the two fabric of earthly and heavenly realms was torn open and overlapped on Jesus, to symbolize and show that Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one come to the Father except through him. We are talking about holiest of Holies present in its full glory. No wonder that peter was deathly afraid after witnessing this, for he knew he was in a holy place! We need to realize that the bright light is the byproduct of what is taking place, yet many are distracted at the fact that they are witnessing no earthly light nor darkness can overcome the light of creation. What is amazing about this passage is the demonstration of Peter's humanity. Out of his fear and through his limitations of human comprehension, he could not compute all that was taking place right before his own eyes. After following Jesus for roughly three years to witness the miracles and gained the same power through Jesus' name; although Jesus foretold of his coming death and resurrection prior to this event; this was outside the box of possibility in his Jewish culture, understanding, and perspective, and hence he reverts to his Jewish spiritual training: to build alter for the each of two prophets and one for Jesus. Scripture does not tell us if Peter understood that he saw the face of God in divine form and did not die! Sometimes we witness the God's glory and miracle right before our vary eyes and yet, we miss the significance of such moment to our lives. We focus on the out of the ordinary and try to fit it within our own framework that we miss out on the power and glory of the Creator that God is trying to share with us.

Even with our limitations, God is gracious and understanding. For the second time in Jesus' life, Heavenly Voice thunders upon the disciples to let them know the point: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him" (v7). In Matthew's recount of transfiguration in Chapter 17, when Peter, James and John heard the voice, they fell to the ground, overcome by fear. If there were any hints of unbelief, for these three disciples, God's voice must have enlightened them and made it as clear as a day with blue sky. Even in the moments like this, Jesus continues to reach out and guides us with mercy and grace. As Matthew's account tells us, "Jesus came and touch[ed] them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone (v7-8). Once again, this is another example that shows that for Jesus, it is not the destination that matters but our spiritual journey with him. Jesus wants to be with us in our moments of highs, lows, and especially in the deep valleys.

So, what does transfiguration mean to us? Just like we celebrate the renewal and essence of easter – being given new life every day in Christ, Jesus’ transfiguration is an invitation for us to journey up to our spiritual mountain each day to be in the presence of God and come down transfigured. When Moses received the two tablets of the covenant from the Lord and spoke with the Lord on Mount Sinai, Moses’ face was shining for the Israelites, so much so when he was done speaking to them, he had to put on a veil.<sup>1</sup> Moses was transformed in the presence of the Lord, and was transfigured in the eyes of the Israelites, for the glory and the spirit of the Lord was resting on him. Therefore, let us dare not blink, put on our spiritual blinkers, and look for the invisible love and miracles of God that are made known and visible to us to witness the glimpse of the glory of the Lord each day. Let us join in the choirs of creation praising the Lord in joy each and every day, regardless of seeing or understanding the work of the Lord around us. Let us be transformed, transmit the marvelous light of the Lord, and sing to the glory of the Lord. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 34:29-35