

The gospel of Luke is written in Greek, the common tongue language used daily in the Roman Empire. Targeting the biggest possible audience, it tells the story of who Jesus is, how he was and is in the world, and how that changes even us.

Last week we read of Jesus challenging the status quo in society, the fear of the “other” who didn’t fit it, or behave according to tradition. Such fear led to an exclusivist vision of God who seemed to see creation not as children but as divided among friends and adversaries. We jump a few chapters to this seminal story in the gospel, located at its center point. The closest friends of Jesus see him for who is truly is, and are silenced in their desire to advise him, as he turns from traveling through the villages preaching to focus on the city of Jerusalem: capital of politics, theology, culture and Jewish identity.

**PRAY** :: προσευχομαι [proseuchomai. Jesus prays in Luke’s Gospel than in the others. (In fact, although he does pray in John’s Gospel, the word is never used!) In Luke’s Gospel, (3:21-22) Jesus is also praying as the heavens are opened in his baptism. “<sup>21</sup> Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” Is Luke suggesting a connection between prayer, baptism and the gates of heaven being opened for us?

**departure** :: εξοδος [exodos] The word for "departure" here is literally "exodus." Moses is talking with Jesus about his exodus. In choosing to write this story in this way is Luke making a direct connection between the mission of Christ and the exodus?

**mountain**: ὄρος [oros] Greek from the Hebrew הָרַ [har] Throughout the mountains are mentioned frequently in the Bible because they dotted the landscape of biblical regions. Mentioned over 500 times in the Bible, they also have a significant symbolic value as a logical religious symbolism for biblical cultures since they are “closer to God” who was believed to dwell in the heavens (as in the sky). As a result, God often reveals himself on the mountaintop.

In the Old Testament, the mountains of Sinai and Zion are most significant. Mount Sinai, of course, is associated with Moses and is the place where Moses received the gift of the Law, the Ten Commandments. Thus, Mount Sinai is a symbol of God’s Covenant with Israel. Zion, to the south, is the location of the Jerusalem Temple. In the New Testament it’s where Jesus appoints the Twelve disciples and delivers (in Matthew) his Sermon on the Mount, conjuring an image of Moses who received the Commandments on Mount Sinai.

**changed** :: ἕτερον [heteron] “other” as in the word heterogeneous (different, other, things mixed together). The Greek here is quite odd for the word "change." It literally reads "The outward appearance of his face 'other'" You could almost read it "The outward appearance of his face was other.

## SCRIPTURES FOR SUNDAY 2.26.2017

### Luke 9:28-45

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

<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.

While everyone was amazed at all that he was doing, he said to his disciples, <sup>44</sup> “Let these words sink into your ears: **THE SON OF MAN** is going to

be betrayed into human hands.”<sup>45</sup> But they did not understand this saying; its meaning was concealed from them, so that they could not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

## Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

**\*What strikes you in this passage ? How does it interact with what you’re living these days, or thinking about?**

**\* The transfiguration of Jesus is a metamorphoses ("transfigured" in Greek: metamorphothe), a transfiguration, a radical change and shift, an event that transforms those who go through it. This transfiguration does not serve only Jesus but prepares him to go back to the people and continue his ministry until his departure. Have you ever been transformed, awestruck, or afraid, in an eyewitness experience of God's presence? When have you had an unquestionable sense of God's presence? Glory? Voice?**

**\* Receiving the law and commandment is a group effort. In the Hebrews Scriptures they're given to the people of God and Moses. Here there is a community with Jesus at this revelation. The disciples seem to not be able to chase the demon out of the boy because they're un-focused. The text implies that the glory of God is only possible if lived together, in community. Nobody, not even Jesus, could shine alone! The work of that trinity shows that only when we are together that God's radiance can light each other's lives. Glory is only possible if shared. It chases of the divisive darkness which can possess us. It would seem then that we are to share the light of Christ to the world, especially those placed in the shadows of our society. In doing that the voice of God is heard in our world by both us and others. How does God's glory chase off the darkness of our society? How are you (we) called to be part of that?**

**\*How do you hear the Spirit of God speaking through this text, giving you hope?; extending an invitation to act, become or speak?**

**dazzling white** :: ἐξαστράπτων [exastraphton] ("shone brightly, brilliantly" or "dazzling") The Greek for "brilliant" (his coat) has tucked within it the word "astra" like "astronomy." Jesus is bright like the stars. Interestingly, the only other place this word appears in the whole Bible is Ezekial and Daniel, perhaps a reminder that transfiguration has an eschatological bent -- it is the future breaking in and not simply the past catching up!

**dwelling**s: σκηνάς [skénas] "a tent, booth, tabernacle, abode, dwelling, mansion, habitation." According to the Hebrew Bible (Exodus 25–31& 35–40) was the portable earthly meeting place of God with the children of Israel from the time of the Exodus from Egypt through the conquering of the land of Canaan. In the Jewish holiday of the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles [same word], Jews celebrated the protection offered by God during their wanderings in the wilderness by building dwellings, booths or tents (Leviticus 23:39-43). Are the disciples offering to do that for Moses and Elijah, who have been interpreted as the law and prophecy, now reunited with the Messiah?

**cloud**: νεφέλη [nephelé]. It's the same word used in the Hebrew Scriptures to describe the cloud in which Jehovah is said to have gone before the Israelites on their march through the wilderness, covering them for protection. "He spread a **cloud** for a covering, and fire to give light by night." - *Psalms 105:39* <sup>21</sup> The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of **cloud** by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. <sup>22</sup> Neither the pillar of **cloud** by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people." - *Exodus 13:21-22*

**overshadowed** :: ἐπεσκίαζεν [episkiazó]. The word is also found in Luke 1: 35 where the Angel promises to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will **overshadow** you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God."

This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!": The voice of heaven speaks only twice in the gospel here, and in Luke 3:21-22 at the baptism of Jesus. "and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." What connection is there between these two episodes?

**voice**: φωνή [phóné] This is the second of two times that the voice of God (of the heavens) appears in the gospel. The other is Luke 3:22.

**THE SON OF MAN**: Jesus is referred to as the "Son of Man" 88 times in the New Testament. A first meaning of the phrase "Son of Man" is as a reference to the prophecy of Daniel 7:13-14, "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a **SON OF MAN**, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." It was understood to be a Messianic title, and would have been intimately familiar for Jews of that age.

A second meaning of the phrase "Son of Man" is that Jesus was truly a human being. God called the prophet Ezekiel "son of man" 93 times. God was simply calling Ezekiel a human being. A son of a man is a man. Jesus was fully God (John 1:1), but He was also a human being (John 1:14).