

Our Saviour Lutheran Church
January 20, 2013

HOLY CONVERSATIONS

"They were discussing his exodus which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." (Luke 9:31)

I've done some eavesdropping. Not deliberately. It just sort of happens. Especially if someone is talking loudly over the din of chiming cell phones in public places. Especially more so if the conversation is filled with expletives and other course language. I can't help it.

How many of our conversations are edifying? We seem to be engaged in more of them all the time. I'm feeling the pressure not just to communicate by phone and e-mail but get into face book and texting. Texting is a real problem in my mind. You hear about all kinds of people driving the length of a football field with eyes glued to some electronic device. They get away with it once. They do it again. And then....(crash). You hear a mom lamenting in tears over her son finding out he won't walk again because someone was texting. I want to know the content of that text she cries. I wanted to know. And I found out "lol". What is that anyways? "lol". ...

Couldn't it have waited?

We don't think they can. But really they could have waited for some better time. And really some of the things we hear in public places..., on the subway, in the mall, or in Tim Hortons might best be tabled indefinitely. A wise man, if there are any wise men left, would say, "most of it would be better left unsaid". Even our talk radio stations are disappointing. "Stay tuned" they convince us, for "in-depth analysis". But you listen, advertisements seem endless and then there's a series of intros peppered with announcements of what time it is. I'm listening and listening but "in-depth understanding" never seems to come. Sometimes I think that the Carthusian order of monks and nuns has it right. Take a vow of silence...except for worship.

Jesus had a conversation. It was a conversation (I learned in a study of the Greek grammar), which was brought from heaven by Moses and Elijah. Now that would have been something to eavesdrop into. While our conversations are so often wanting, you may be assured that his was not. Good doctor Luke, the detail man of the four evangelists, gives us the content of his conversation with Moses and Elijah. Considering how the Gospel of Luke, symbolized by the sacrificial Ox, that content is of no surprise.

"They were discussing his exodus which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:31)

While everyone was seeing His glory radiating through His humanity, these men of God were seeing the cause of such glory "his sacrificial death on the cross". Now there is a lot of meaning bound up in that term "exodus" that your English translations only get a part of when they say "decease" or "death". Now that is of course the essential point. They were discussing his death. But with the word exodus there is more. They saw ... everything. It was the whole movement of the story from being "begotten of the Father from eternity" to his "incarnation in the womb of Mary" to his "being born of a Virgin" to his "travelling to Egypt" to his "baptism in the Jordan" to his earthly wanderings, prayer vigils, fastings and yes, ultimately, the culminating

achievement of suffering, death and resurrection. His exodus is the story of travel. He comes from heaven above to earth below and back again. His is a movement to the promised land through his life, death and resurrection. Moses and Elijah came from eternal realms in heaven to discuss all of these things. And they had the luxury of discussing it without time constraints. Alas we do not.

But we get the idea. Moses who led God's people Israel was discussing with Elijah and Jesus how Jesus was that "prophet like unto Moses" and more. He would take the New Israel (the Church) not through the waters of the Jordan river but through the waters of Holy Baptism where we participate in the mystery of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. And living out our baptism, taking up our cross with Jesus day by day, we enter the Promised Land of heaven.

Elijah certainly knew of the exodus also. His own life followed at times an exodus and salvation pattern. In 1 Kings 17, Elijah was driven out of the land by a famine (vv. 1-4). In exile, Elijah received food from ravens and then from a Gentile widow, just as Israel was given the fruitful land of Goshen. Of all the prophets, his miracles most fully foreshadow the resurrection of the Christ.

In a Passover scene, he raised the widow's son from the dead (vv. 8-24). Finally, Elijah was caught up into heaven by a whirlwind to enter his eternal Sabbath rest.

I could relate more. But as I've already mentioned, we don't have the luxury of eternity as did Moses and Elijah. As we discovered, neither did Jesus. But Peter James and John certainly wanted that luxury.

I wonder how long they stayed on that Holy Mountain. No doubt, Peter, James and John were entranced desiring to be there. They were overawed with sights of glory when they should have been listening to the words of the prophets on the necessity of our own exodus journeys involving suffering and death for the sake of the Kingdom. Before any glory, we are all charged with the task of following Jesus "take up your cross and follow me" Jesus said.

But Peter wanted to build tabernacles for them all to live in. Even have one for Jesus. Now that's the Eastern mindset isn't it. I love those from the middle East and other lands where time is so seemingly inconsequential. Even today you might have a wedding that lasts for three days. Worship services are scarcely less than 3 hours. Talk to someone who is Eastern Orthodox and they'll tell you about it. Visit someone in a home steeped in such culture and you'll discover that there's the expectation of a meal and drink and conversations into the night. It doesn't matter whether you work the next day at 8 a.m. There's something beautiful about that yet still annoying for those who worship schedule.

Ahhhh. They wanted to stay.

Heaven was touching the earth that day and they wanted that sense of eternity forever.

But it could not last. Perhaps unexpectedly, it was the Eternal Father who created time who knew of His Son's mission in human time that must now move forward. From the cloud he calls. "This is my Son, My Chosen One, Listen to Him". Moses and Elijah disappeared behind the veil.

Then there was only Jesus. And he was beckoning them downward towards his mission. But it would ultimately become their mission also. Remember what he said just prior to the mountaintop experience? Take up your cross and follow me.

Take up your cross with Jesus. There is one fashioned just for you. Maybe take up the cause of the unborn and tell the world that these little ones are human beings with a right to life. Oh, that's a heavy cross. Simply utter that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Such exclusivity - - definately not the Canadian way. What a cross! Pray in the inner sanctum of your home unseen and without praise for your congregation and the leaders therein. That's a cross too. Put your worship time on high priority sacrificing invitations to parties, conferences or a date with that extra hour of sleep. A small little cross. But there's one just for you. Oh, you crazy man! I'm sure you're thinking. A cross? Really? Suffering?

I'm sorry to break it to you. Vast numbers of televangelists want to give you the "prosperity Gospel". They want to give you some "name it and claim it" theology. They want your worship experience to be as much like a theatre and recreation as possible. They want you to think of how happy you'll be in the Christian life. But what Jesus has in store for you is more. It is deeper and more meaningful than life lived in superficiality. He has a life of fulfillment and purpose, struggle and battle and ultimately victory in Him. I like how Luke describes our Lord's exodus. It is an exodus he "accomplishes" in Jerusalem. For we who follow. We share with Him a sense of "accomplishment". We hope to hear similar words from the Father at life's end: "Well done, good and faithful servant".

Remember what was to come after suffering. It was resurrection. It was glory. Jesus rose from the dead. They could scarcely recognize him. He glowed in glory.

Such is our calling also. We take up our cross with Jesus that we may follow him into glory. Did you know that each one of us already gives off a sort of glow. The infra red cameras can spot it -- just like in a James Bond movie. I suppose it is kind of to be expected as we are made in the image of God. But when the image is restored in Christ then wow. We follow him where we shall shine like the stars forever and ever.

Amen.