

Luke tells his readers how Jesus showed up at the lake Galilee and recruited his first batch of disciples. It was Peter, James, and John. Andrew was Peter's brother, but Luke does not include him in the company of the disciples whom Jesus called, after they hauled in a record catch of fish.

According to the Gospel of John, it was Andrew who led Peter to Jesus. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, and while he was still with The Baptist, he met Jesus. Andrew then introduced Peter to Jesus, and Jesus went to Galilee the next day. We can stitch the accounts in the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John, and surmise that Jesus went to Galilee with the intention of recruiting Peter and others.

In the account of transfiguration that we have read today, we also see the same three disciples staying with Jesus on the mountain. Jesus took only the three—Peter, James, and John—up to the mountain top, leaving the rest of the disciples at the

foot of the mountain. We do not know why, but it appears that Jesus seemed to have put a great weight on these three disciples over the rest.

I often wonder, whether it was because these three were the only ones who dropped everything and followed him, when Jesus called them. Maybe Jesus was impressed by such a radical decisiveness. We would have to agree that dropping everything, including the livelihood, and following a stranger, is a radical thing to do. Apparently, it has left Jesus a lasting impression on the quality of the discipleship of these three.

Maybe, that is why Jesus picked these three, when he faced a grave moment, such as when he prayed on Gethsemane, the night before he was arrested. This time, however, his trusted disciples could not share the agony, or pray with him for one single hour with him. Sometimes, you have to do all by your self what you do not want to do.

Getting back to the Transfiguration story, we know what happened on the mountain top. But what was happening at the foot of the mountain, when Jesus and his trusted disciples were up on the mountain? When the boss and his lieutenants were away, the rest of the disciples were getting their weaknesses exposed. A father brought his epileptic son to them, but the disciples could not drive out the unclean spirit and heal him. That made them look bad. They were good for nothing.

Was it too much to ask the disciples to drive out the unclean spirit? Just to be fair, shouldn't they have just waited until Jesus came down the mountain? Was it too much to ask his disciples, because they were not to be expected to accomplish such a feat?

As it turned out, it was not so. Back in the beginning of the same chapter 9, this was what happened:

¹ And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal.

And when the disciples went on the mission trip, this is what happened:

⁶ And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

And when the disciples had returned from the trip, they reported back to Jesus all they had done (v. 10). Then Jesus took them to a retreat in a city called Bethsaida. So Luke covered basically all the exploits of the disciples with the power and authority they received. So I gather that their mission trip was a huge success, and they needed the rest from being on the road for so long.

Okay, so what happened to the disciples, between the mission trip and the transfiguration? It should have been a cakewalk to drive out the unclean spirit.

They have done it so many times, while they were on their mission trip. Now, a father brings an epileptic child to them, and they find themselves embarrassingly impotent.

It must have been a longest day for the disciples who stayed behind. They must have longed for Jesus to come down from the mountain, so that they could save their faces. And the same might be said for the father, too. He was waiting for Jesus to come down and heal his only son. When Jesus came down, he made it clear to Jesus what happened: I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.

Now we can hear the frustration in Jesus' voice: "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you?" To the sensitive ears of the modern people, this may come as unwarrantedly too harsh. Why did Jesus lash out like that to his poor disciples who could not drive out the unclean spirit? Why did he have to be so mean?

It may sound unfair to judge the disciples 2000 years post facto, but if we understand Jesus correctly, he became irritated, when his disciples failed to perform what was well within their power and authority. Now, they have failed miserably, even with the power and authority vested in themselves. Nevertheless, I am sure the disciples did not feel like a perverse and faithless generation.

I guess it was doubly frustrating for Jesus to have experienced the transfiguration just the night before, and to come down the mountain only to find the mess and confusion. Have you ever gone on a fabulous vacation, and come back to work, only to find the mess your co-workers left just for you, even though they should have been able to handle the situations? Maybe, then, we could sympathize with Jesus.

In a way, life is like that. There are times we experience great encouragements and power, only to be let down by the events that we feel we could not control—in

marriage, in career, or in relationships. For example, we may have gotten the long-awaited raise, only to find that a loved one fall ill, and wipe out the raise. We may have attended the worship service that really uplifted the spirit, only to argue bitterly with the spouse in the car all the way home. There are myriad ways that could ruin our days.

Life is like that. And that is when we are tested of our faith and mettle. The devil always chooses the right moment to ruin the good thing. And sometimes, we may find ourselves in utter failure, like the one the disciples experienced. We may look just fine outside, but spiritually speaking, we know we are all broken up inside. Sometimes, we are in such turmoil, that we could not even focus to pray.

Events like these may dispirit our resolution and determination. After having experienced such a failure so many times, we might even come to the point where we convince ourselves that there is

no use trying. And that is how we slowly fail in the spiritual struggle against the forces that seek to destroy the abundance and enjoyment of our lives. Metaphorically speaking, that is how we give in to the devil's temptation.

What we should never forget is that God has given us the spiritual gifts. And Jesus made it clear to us: he came, so that we may have life, and have it abundantly. We just have to trust that God has given those who love God enough of the gifts, so that they could have life and have it abundantly. All we ever needed has been already given to us.

Jesus told the grief-stricken father, "Bring him to me." So can we bring to Jesus our grievances, too. May God heal you and strengthen you, as you struggle to remain faithful in this perverse and faithless generation.