



## BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

**Last Sunday in Epiphany (B)**  
**February 14, 2021**

**RCL: 2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9**

### **2 Kings 2:1-12**

Elisha and the company of prophets knew the great prophet Elijah would leave them, that God would take him away soon. Elijah himself could sense he would soon leave this earth, and he asks Elisha what he can do for Elisha. Elisha asks Elijah for a portion of his spirit, like an inheritance for a firstborn. Elisha has been with him for some time now and sees him as a father; Elisha vows not to leave Elijah's side when Elijah tells Elisha to stay behind. He knew Elijah's time was coming to an end and wanted to be with Elijah as much as possible.

After Elijah ascends, Elisha takes up Elijah's mantle (the mantle being the symbol of prophetic power), the origin of this common phrase. Elijah knows Elisha is to be his successor, yet, in his faith, he leaves that fate in the hands of God.

Elisha sees Elijah ascend into heaven; Elisha mourns and tears his clothes. Following this passage, we see the grief Elisha experiences in mourning leads him to cry out and ask where the Lord, the God of Elijah, is. God seems to respond by parting the waters as Elisha strikes them, and this exhibits the connection between Elijah and Elisha. They are so intimately connected, Elisha performs some of the same miracles Elijah did.

- What mantles have you taken up? What spiritual authority have you received from your mentors?
- What gifts do we leave behind for those who learn from us and look up to us?
- What spiritual inheritances have you received? From whom did you receive them?

### **Psalm 50:1-6**

In this opening of Psalm 50, God reveals Godself and God's glory is not strictly silent. God speaks and the earth *is*, the rising and the setting of the sun *is*. This psalm evokes creation by echoing God's calling of the earth and heavens and sun, and this psalm also evokes the Day of Judgment.

The description of God and God's acts here are different from other revelations of God seen in the Scriptures, like when God revealed Godself to Elijah. Elijah sees God's back and God is in the sound, or

the voice, or sheer silence (1 Kings 19:12). The contrast is one reminder that God's revelation - and Godself - is not limited.

- What glory do you experience in “silence”?
- What silence is found in the forces of nature?
- What images and forces come to mind when you think about God?

## **2 Corinthians 4:3-6**

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians contains some responses to Paul's critics who felt he was being crafty or cunning in order to withhold the Gospel or parts of it. In this passage from 2 Corinthians, Paul explains that it is not he who is hiding the Gospel, but the powers of this world. Paul explains that when one turns to Christ, the blinding veil is removed. The base assumption for Paul is that the Gospel is not veiled – the Gospel is unveiled and a light shining through darkness. Christ removes the veil that the powers of this world pull over our eyes and we see the light that God has made shine in darkness.

At the Epiphany and the season that follows, we look at the ways God has made light shine in our world with our passages about Jesus' works in the world. As we come to the end of this season, after the realization that God has made light shine into our world, how do we carry this light through changing seasons in our life (*i.e.*, Lent)? In what ways has God made light shine in our hearts?

- As messengers of the Gospel, in what ways do we carry God's unveiled light for all, even our critics, to see?

## **Mark 9:2-9**

In this scene, Jesus is talking with Elijah and Moses. Yet, there are no recorded words of this conversation. In this moment of God's glory revealed in the Transfiguration of Christ Jesus, as the disciples stood stunned and as Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah, there is silence.

Peter, James, and John had been with Jesus for some time now and witnessed his many works, like walking on water. Yet, at the Transfiguration, they were still shocked to see Jesus' divinity revealed in glory. Silence may unsettle us. And, like Peter, we may start talking simply to fill the air because we are uncomfortable in silence. Still, even in confusion and fear and trembling and silence, light shines and God speaks. We may not fully comprehend why we are there at that moment, why we have the privilege to be on the mountaintop to witness a revelation, but as disciples, we may be called simply to listen.

- What about silence unsettles? What prompts you to fill a void seen in silence?
- Think about the times you have caught glimpses of God's glory and your reaction.
- Think about the light you have witnessed and received from God and from spiritual mentors. How you will carry that light in a world where many are blinded by a veil of the powers of this world?

*This Bible study was written by **Joseph Cundiff**, a seminarian at Berkeley Divinity School at Yale.*

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