

A gentleman came in last week with a poem about life

The poem compared our life to a tandem bike ride

At first Christ is peddling, we are steering

It is a careful, planned out ride

Very safe, even if a bit boring

At some point Christ suggest changing places

And then the ride really starts

Up mountains

Down steep valleys at breakneck speeds

Sometimes all we can do is hang on

Then, just when it seems like we are going to crash

He calls to us

'Pedal harder'

This reminded me of my time as a high school chaplain

We took 30 high school kids white water rafting in Colorado

They instructed us to do one thing

When they gave the word

Paddle with all your might

We knew we were not in control

And what might seem a safer path was not so safe

They knew the only way was through the heart of the rapids

They would avoid the rocks

But needed our help to avoid getting caught in the whirlpools
So we hit a category 5 rapids
I could only see a wall of water over 10 ft tall
Right in front of us
Our guide called out 'Paddle'
And we shot through the obstacle, and on down the river

I think most of us experience a faith ride like this
Sometimes it is a nice sunny day on the river
Sometimes there is a waterfall in the way
Sometimes we are very strong
And then there are times we are full of doubt
This is normal
It even happened to the Apostles
Look at Peter
Only 6 days previous, Jesus had asked a question:
Who do people say the Son of Man is?
And Peter replied
You are the Christ, the Son of God
And then Christ gives him a new name
Petros or Rock
And Jesus tells him

Upon this rock I will build my church
Shortly after this, Jesus tells them he must suffer, die and be raised
So Peter takes him aside
Tries to straighten him out
And for this, he is called Satan
Jesus tells him to get behind him
For he is thinking as man and not as God
I think Jesus I really telling him 'Paddle'
I will be the guide
So today Jesus takes Peter, James and John off by themselves
Up a mountain, where they get a glimpse of his glory
Their faith is strong once again
But this happened shortly before his passion
When Peter would deny him
And all the disciples would run away
After which, Jesus was raised, and appeared to the disciples
Can you imagine the ride they were on?
It is an experience that comes from following God
Letting go of the control we all desire

Abraham experienced this same thing
He was chosen by God to be the father of many people

The problem was that he was getting old

His wife, even older

So Abraham decided to take control of the situation

He had a son with a slave girl

But that was not God's plan

So they were sent away

And God worked a miracle

Abraham's wife, Sarah, had a child

Through Isaac, Abraham's name would live on

But then God asked something else of Abraham

The ultimate sacrifice

His son Isaac to be offered up on Mt Moriah

So Abraham and Isaac set off

Isaac actually carrying the wood of the sacrifice

Like Christ, carrying the cross up Calvary

In the end, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is stopped

A ram is offered in his place

Then Abraham is offered a covenant

'I swear by myself, declares the Lord

I will bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky

All this because you obeyed my command'

Abraham certainly knew highs and lows in life following God
And in our Gospel, Peter James and John are experiencing a high
They are on the mountaintop with Christ
They see him transfigured before their eyes
They see Moses and Elijah with him
Representing the law and the prophets
The very ones Christ fulfills in every way
What is their reaction to this?
Peter calls out
'Rabbi, let us make 3 tents'
He wants to extend the high
Enjoy the moment they are glimpsing
He wants to put off the difficulties that lay ahead
He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified
This is a gift of the Holy Spirit
This is what Fear of the Lord is all about
Seeing something so far above anything humanly possible
Terror seizes us
But instead of driving us away
We are caught up in the wonder, the mystique
It calls us to believe, drawing us into its embrace

Then they hear a voice

This is my beloved Son

Listen to him

The verb 'to listen' comes from *audere*

The Latin root of obey

Just as Abraham listened and obeyed

The disciples are called to listen to Jesus

So we are called to listen and to obey

The covenant God made with Abraham

Is fulfilled in Jesus Christ

And continues to be lived out in us

A covenant wrapped up in listening

Accepting the gift offered

And living it out in obedience

We have an invitation before us

It is an invitation of love

To enter into the love of God for his only son

A love so deep, it gives sense to the cross

Though we owe everything to God

It was God who sacrificed everything for us

He did not spare even his own son

Why?

So we could give up chocolate for 40 days?

No, so we would open our ears and hearts

So we would do as He commands

This is my beloved son

Listen to him

Obey his word

This is the true sacrifice

To do the Will of God

With one word of caution

Hang on, it's a wild ride