

My husband and I got in a fight recently. A normal marriage thing, you know? But what sucked about it was that even though the content was different, it felt like the same fight. The same one we have had over, and over and over. And I could feel myself acting in a way that I disliked. But I felt like I had no power over it. I was saying “sorry” but it was sooooo scripted. It was also incredibly insincere. I was using this mopey tone. Kind of saying sorry just so the argument could end (not really desiring to resolve the conflict — feeling stubborn about how I had been wronged). And towards the end, after he called me out on the worst apology ever, he added: you want to know what the worst part of this is? I feel like I am arguing with your mom! And the worst part for me was: he was right.

Has any couple ever been there?

Can something new happen in human history?

Can something new happen in our lives?

Or are we destined to a cyclical life?

Where we just keep repeating and replaying what has gone before?

Can something new happen in human history?

I think that for the disciples James, Peter and John, the central characters of our gospel today, they were risking hope as they followed Jesus, believing, yes, something new can happen in human history.

Being raised in tight knit Jewish communities, they would have been immersed in their ancestral story. They would have heard and known by heart the story we heard today in our reading: the call of Abraham. That story that comes near the beginning theirs and our sacred book. They would have known that Abraham was called after the chaotic stories of life outside the garden of Eden, life ridden with human

violence, evil, and pride. They would have known that when God said, *“Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk”* he was calling Abraham to break the destructive patterns of life that had gone before him. And they would have known that Abraham, a nobody with no credentials was called by God on a great adventure to a new land and new way of living. And they would have known the covenantal promise made by God to Abraham: *“I will make a great nation out of you. And all nations will find blessing in you.”*

Abraham for them, for us, is God’s sign to the world that there can be a **NEW** thing in history. That we are not stuck in repetition of the same old human story of chaos and human destruction. That God desires to work in history through humans. So God makes a covenant with Abraham, not because of anything that Abraham had done, but because our God is committed to us human beings, *to rescue us while we are still in our cycles of sin.*

And in Abraham, God makes the *impossible* possible. A man with a wife- the two of them old that they are close to death, a child is birthed. Out of death, bursts forth new life. And with this birth, a fragile project is put in motion. Abraham’s family were called to live in a way where all people would look to them and be blessed. And this blessing will radically reorient human hearts towards God rather than away. Towards life rather than towards death.

Yes, Peter, James and John would have known Abraham’s story well, knowing that it didn’t go as planned. They would know the heartbreak of their ancestors, how they were enslaved and rescued by God. How they were given the LAW, to guide their living to bless all nations. They would have known the failure of the kingdom in the promised land and the experience of exile to Babylon.

But, hanging on to the promises God made to Abraham, Israel, to David, they risked hoping that God would be faithful to them, to their people, despite their failures. They were waiting, in first century Palestine, living under Roman occupation, they were waiting, anticipating the messianic era to arrive. For God's vision of blessing for the world to make itself real. For the covenantal promises to be fulfilled.

I can only imagine that when Jesus called them, Peter, James and John, they felt a close kinship with Abraham. Perhaps they too felt like nobodies. Felt like they didn't have moral qualifications. And perhaps they felt Abraham's courage as they left their nets, their father's house, their kin, to follow him. And I can only imagine that had begun to think: okay, this has to be "the something new" happening in human history we have been waiting for.

I mean, they had seen this man's power of healing. They had listened to his teaching authority. They saw him walk on water.

So when Jesus had asked them, who do you think I am? Peter earnestly proclaimed maybe what the others felt: you are the Messiah!

The one to usher in the messianic age. Yes — something new was happening in human history!

But then Jesus revealed finally how he would be the messiah: through dying.

And Peter gave voice to what the others must have felt: NO! That is just the same story that has always played out. If you die, it is over. This is not the messianic age.

This is not something new in human history. Then sin and death have the final say, and history simply keeps repeating itself.

Shortly after Jesus revealed his identity of being the messiah to his disciples, he took his closest friends: Peter, James and John to a mountain. And on this mountain he became radiant, transfigured. He was like the burning bush, he was like the pillar of light that led the Israelites through the desert to the Promised Land, he was like the glowing Holy of Holies that was at the center of their temple of old.

MOUNTAIN. WHITE LIGHT. SHINING LIKE THE SUN. These are images of connected to their God. These are images of the power of the One who changes history. Then a voice: confirming Jesus' identity, confirming his connection with God the Father. "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him".

So they fear, for were they in the real presence of the most high God? Was he right here?

Jesus immediately comforts them: *do not be afraid*. He speaks the same words that had been spoken by their God throughout the ages, from Abraham to the prophets.

So, together, in shock, they all descend down the mountain. As they descend, Peter, James and John very well may be wondering what was Jesus' special relationship God, wondering still — is he the Messiah? Then Jesus says: don't tell anyone of this until the Son of Man is risen from the dead. Again he mentions this dying and rising.

And it wouldn't be until later that all the pieces would come together for these disciples. That on that mountain was their God and this is how God transforms human history: By becoming the innocent victim

that passes through the horrors of crucifixion and is raised to new life as a sign and promise for the future of all.

And God desires our participation in all of this. God does not just call Abraham, not just the disciples like Peter, James and John. Today Jesus is calling us. He is calling us not because we have done anything that makes us morally superior. He calls us not because we have proven ourselves through some sort of resume, some sort of spiritual enlightenment, etc. No, we are called just as we are. Right now. Bumbling along imperfectly, repeating the sins of our parents, feeling like failures, unsuccessful, unworthy. Feeling like nobodies.

God calls us to be transfigured with him. To share in the glory of his holy life. And to show us that he does not need us to be anything other than who we are right now, he freely enters all the messiness of life, he enters the darkness, the evil and death. There is not a place in human life where God does not enter. There is not a place where God's life does not touch. And God wishes to rescue this world to raise *all* of it to new life.

We can accept his life; his transformative life. We can accept it, allow it to transform us right now. Through being in community; by hearing his word, by gathering around this table and partaking in the eucharist. We can accept his life by allowing his love to literally enter into us, just as we are. Allow his grace to touch our wounds, our brokenness. And allow ourselves to hear his voice whisper into our ear: my child, yes — something new can happen in human history. And I want to make it happen through you.

Do we have the courage to say amen?