

## Lent II

Cycle C, 3.12.22

Genesis 15:5-12,17-18/ Philippians 3:17-4:1/  
Luke 9:28-36

### CONVERSION CAN BE A “LONG TIME COMIN”

In the summer of 2017 singer Bruce Springsteen, “the Boss” as he’s known to millions of fans, premiered his stage show simply titled “Springsteen on Broadway.” It was his desire to do a show that was as personal and intimate as possible – just the artist, his guitar, a piano and the words and music. Some of the show is sung, some is spoken – following the arc of his life and his work. His wife Patti was also in most of the shows – nearly 250 performances at the Walter Kerr Theatre in NYC.



I haven’t seen the show but I did hear a segment on the Springsteen Sirius Radio Channel (which I listen to avidly). The spoken introduction to his song “Long Time Comin” stopped me in my tracks. To me his narration speaks to our Lenten journey – both conversion and transfiguration. If I may, although not with Springsteen’s rough and gravelly voice, I’ll share a part of his text:

*This is the final days of Patti's first pregnancy. And I receive a surprise visit from my father at my home in LA. Now he'd driven 500 miles unannounced to knock on my door, that's his style. So at 11 a.m. we sit*

*Sunday dining room, and we're nursing morning beers, that's his style. (That's my father's breakfast of champions.) When, my dad, never a talkative man, right, blurted out, "You've been very good to us". And I nodded that, that I had, ya know, and uh, and he says, "And I wasn't very good to you". And, the room just, was, stood still. As to my shock, ya know, the acknowledgeable was being acknowledged, if I, if I didn't know better I would've sworn an apology of some sort was being made, and it was. Here in the last days before I was to become a father, my own father was visiting me to warn me of the mistakes that he had made, and to warn me not to make them with my own children. To release them from the chain of our sins, my fathers of mine and our fathers before, that they may be free, to make their own choices and to live their own lives.*

*We are **ghosts** or we are **ancestors** in our children's lives. We either lay our mistakes, our burdens upon them, and we haunt them, or we assist them in laying those old burdens down, and we free them from the chain of our own flawed behavior. And as ancestors, we walk alongside of them, and we assist them in finding their own way, and some transcendence. My father, on that day, was petitioning me, for an ancestral role in my life after being a ghost for a long, long time. He wanted me to write a new end to our relationship, and he wanted me to be ready for the new beginning that I was about to experience. It was the greatest moment in my life with my dad, and it was all that I needed.*

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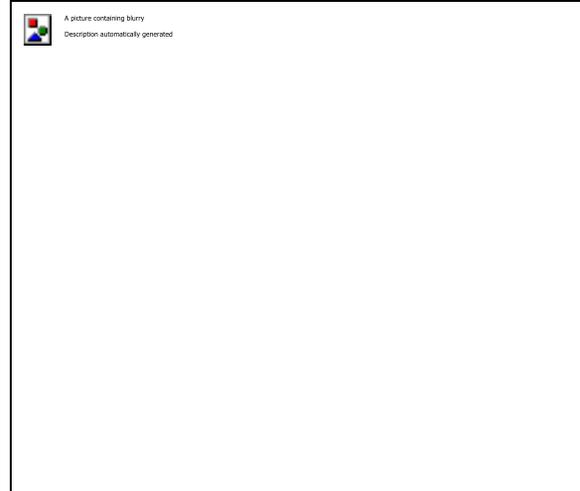
One author suggests that the division between father and son is the deepest wound in the Western world. [Apologies to the women here. I can only speak from a man’s experience. Truth is that women are

also affected by this wound as you see it play out in the men in your lives.] Unmet expectations on both sides can leave fathers withdrawn and sons exasperated. But even when there's no open warfare, many men long for a deeper friendship with the men who raised them. The forces driving fathers and sons apart are a natural process and adolescent mutiny is a teenager's way of differentiation, of becoming his own person. As men, our emotional reticence can deepen the divide between father and son.



So many factors leave a lingering distance between fathers and sons that lasts long past adolescence and can harm a man's adult relationships and life choices. We don't really grow up until we've come to terms with our fathers. For me that didn't happen until nearly fifteen years after my father had died. We need our fathers to bless us in a way that brings us into adulthood. Isn't that what Springsteen experienced the day his father drove five hundred miles to see him and have a beer with him – just before his own child was about to be born? There was implicit forgiveness for mistakes of the past and the beginning of a new path forward between father and son.

On Mount Tabor in our gospel story -- in this mystical setting of thin mountain air, dazzling glow of light and the shadows of dense clouds, greatest moments occur for Jesus and for Peter, James and John.

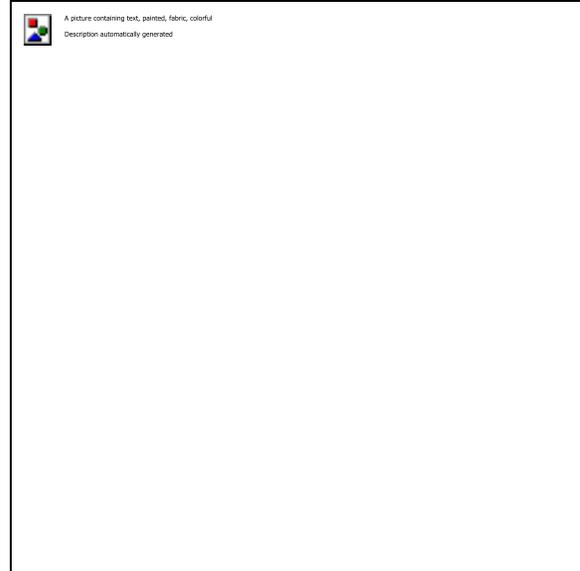


The skies open up and the voice of God the Father is heard: *This is my chosen Son*. What affirmation Jesus must have felt; what deep connection with the One who birthed him into being. Here was the Father whom Jesus could turn to in his trials and tribulations. Here was the Father whom Jesus begged to take the cup of pain and suffering away...*if it be possible*. Here was the one whom Jesus could turn to at the end of his life: *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit*. Here was the one of whom Jesus could say: *I and the Father are one*.

Jesus was affirmed as the beloved of God. He needed no one else's approval. In fact, soon after he comes down from the mountain, Jesus will be without anyone's approval, even denied by his friends and followers. He had to stand firm in a God-given identity that no one, not even death, could rob from him. As the beautiful Lenten gospel spiritual we sang last Sunday professes: *Jesus walked this lonesome valley... he had to walk it by himself; oh, nobody else could walk it for him*. Appearing with Jesus transfigured were the two figures of Moses and Elijah. Both of them, like Jesus, were persecuted in their own time. These two were not ghosts from the past; these were ancestors, whose wisdom offered guidance and prepared the

way for the coming of the Christ. You and I have entered into divine partnership, a covenant with God who has the power to give us courage for today and hope in tomorrow. It began with Abraham and Sarah, our ancestors in faith, and it won't be complete until it includes all their descendants, as numerous as the stars of the heavens. How will you and I be wisdom figures for this generation and trusted ancestors for those who come after us? We need a lot of hope for tomorrow, hope that springs from our faith. Each day the news brings us more images of our world's failure to live as God's people – images of our fragile earth bruised by a lack of concern for our environment instead of preserving it for generations to come; images of nearly two million Ukrainian women and children fleeing their homeland to protect their lives, their country being destroyed by a demagogue who traffics in lies and the delusions of his own ego. All these images call into question the efficacy of our prayers and our belief in the providence of God.

Now, as much as ever before, we look to our ancient faith, to the wisdom of our ancestors that we may persevere in trusting God and do what we can to restore peace to our world. We still have many days of the forty days of Lent to seek God's mercy and dream again the vision of glory that God has for us and for the world: a dream of unity and peace, where people help to bear one another's burdens, share each other's joys and walk together to the Promised Land.



We have a choice to make. Will we merely be ghosts to the generations that follow us? Faded memories of people who exerted little influence? Or will the foundation of faith that we live by and lay for those who come after us allow us to be true ancestors?

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